

Artistic Cultural Heritage Protection Services: Building a Library of Treasured Local Resources: Sandun, China—a Case Study

Chen Bin

Director of the Office of Sandun Culture, Arts Librarian, Hangzhou Library, Hangzhou, China.

18158125379@163.com

Translated from an original text in Chinese and English by: Kim Wishart, Marquand Library of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University, Princeton NJ, United States



Copyright © 2015 by **Chen Bin**. This work is made available under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>

Abstract:

In China, at the regional level, the collection and preservation of local documents related to historical and cultural artifacts and institutions is one of the fundamental tasks of the library as a cultural soft power. Global libraries also place high value on the collection and curation of local documents and the development of regional cultural resources. Documentation of local history is a long-term global public library objective. Research on art and cultural heritage, the protection and preservation of these assets, and information exchange services have now become an important part of the documentation of local cultural history.

Libraries have long neglected material culture, and specifically documentation related to visual arts and culture. Documents and artefacts related to material culture and the visual and performing arts are often ephemeral, and frequently disappear due to historical circumstances and environmental degradation, never to be seen again. Combining the work of art and cultural heritage protection with the scientific and technological tools at our disposal, my objective at this 81st IFLA World Congress is to appeal to the global library community to attend to regional culture and artistic heritage. Through modern service technologies and humanistic ideals, we can build a sound repository of local history and culture that will remain available for generations to come.

Keywords: Sandun culture¹, Art and cultural heritage protection, Local history, Archival collections, Collection development, Industrial innovation and development plans for artistic heritage, Work and services of the Librarian.

¹ Sandun, Wenxing, Dengcai, and Water-Moon Lake constitute famous towns and historic sites in this area. This paper is a product of the larger series of projects, “Sandun Social Sciences, the Next Ten Years: Cultural Sandun,” funded up to 200,000 *renminbi* (approximately USD 32,000).

Introduction

The history of art is the history of humanity. This paper aims to provide suggestions on how best to protect and interpret the culture that surrounds us. Cooperation and symbiosis are the library's primary goals in building a documents archive. This paper explores the full range of services the library can contribute to the fields of regional art and cultural heritage. Those entities that fall under this notion of "cultural heritage" include innovative ideas, digital SIMA technology, the library itself, the resources and expertise of senior library staff, and the cultural industries of the region. An important component of the library's mission in these endeavours is activating regional cultural heritage for the user and the public through document exchange services.

Taking the Sandun area in Hangzhou as a case study, this paper employs real on-the-ground investigations that demonstrate both the scientific and social value of art and cultural heritage. It is hoped that documentary archives of regional art and cultural heritage can become an integral part of the core mission of the library.

Local documents and the overall development strategy of art and cultural heritage preservation from the perspective of regional culture

Documents encountered in field work relating to art are complex and often rely on difficult technology. Once we have developed and received approval for our project plan, we will enter into the implementation phase, during which we will use multiple methods and technological tools to complete a type of virtual preservation thorough documentation of the artistic and cultural heritage of the Sandun area.

Regional culture is closely related to art and culture

Local art and cultural information records provide data on the history of the area. Sandun is a renowned ancient town of south China with over 2000 years of history. Located south of the Yangtze River, Sandun is now a key incorporated area within Hangzhou City.

Sandun should rightly have its own library. For close to fifty years, the focus has been only on the acquisition of documents that range in form from original copies to electronic video and digital productions, resulting in a rich picture of Sandun and its history. We have tried to focus on documentation from 220 years ago to the present, saving all textual data and physical and information resources available to date, including items relating to local history, politics, economy, culture, and education. Although the territory of Sandun has changed substantively over time, such change has not had a negative impact on the area's artistic heritage.

The Sandun government also aims to preserve the artistic culture of the area, and tries to include it in the larger "history of Sandun." Wall paintings that were executed over time on partition walls and on many layers of wall surfaces, including exteriors with layers of peeling lime-based surfaces, foundation stone bricks, and interior masonry structures, provide multi-layered sources of information.

We look here at the upper levels of wall surface on the new bridge in Sandun:

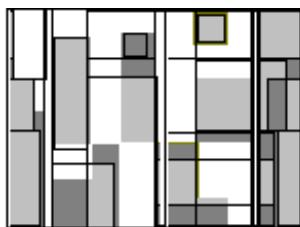
Figure 1:



SIMA technology color analysis chart:



SIMA image structure analysis:



Here, “wall painting” refers to the most recent extant drawing visible on the wall’s surface. The wall painting here records over 600 years of history; even on the innermost layer, which is coated in lime, scattered traces of pigment are found. Over time, the painting has become more than a singular original painting; because of the effects of rain and the general climate, many people have tried to make adjustments and repairs, and even repainted. The paint currently visible on the surface is from 1820 or later, after centuries of copying.

Ordinary materials used in the picture by Dian Qing, for example, include cinnabar, malachite green, violet, brown powder, green lotus, etc., in depicting the colors of the palace. The colored areas of the background and the solid lines exquisitely depict the characters represented and reflect the spatial relationships between these elements. The narrative sequence is better grasped through indoor and outdoor viewing. Sandun’s local documentation work, in addition to studying the art history of painting and the heritage of the materials employed, also focuses on drawing implements, color collocation, and key parts of the figures depicted.

These last items are archived for scientific education services. Accordingly, the local documentation of Sandun's art heritage also involves the following:

1. Integrated documents of painting of Sandun firewall integrated documents
2. Documents integration of "Sandun painting and the history of the Sandun region"
3. Research documents on the history of the Sandun district
4. Sandun: research on folk arts
5. Sandun local art and culture heritage protection research documents
6. Sandun complete works
7. Sandun and painting
8. Digital Sandun—Art and cultural heritage education
9. Sandun Culture virtual reality experience

Amazing wall art exists at any number of places in the Sandun district. Because of this wealth of cultural material, there is no end to the future of the library as it strives to build an archive related to this material and present it to the public. Developing and delivering the services to support the documentation and preservation of this artistic heritage present significant challenges.

The Sandun district has developed a number of systems in establishing its artistic and cultural heritage. First, the name of the cultural heritage objects or sites in the jurisdiction are not changed as place names have changed over time. Sandun is recording art and culture in documents through the local library and cultural institutions responsible for the unified management of the district.

Second, the re-allocation of art documents resources to reflect "local" properties establishes a considerable utilization of documents. In developing the transformation mechanisms necessary for refining the technological output related to Sandun's cultural monuments, Sandun exerts its regional economic value.

Third, the main focus of the government has been on the personnel of academic disciplines and professional librarians within the Sandun region. It has encouraged all types of personnel to provide service platforms for government departments, and to improve our ability to develop this body of information.

Artistic culture symbolizes the importance of local civilization

The customs of Sandun are simple, its architectural style noble and elegant, and its cuisine exquisite. Within the Sandun district, communities have their own distinct verbal expressions, and attach a great importance to their unique folk customs. The Sandun Library and the other cultural organizations of the district that are charged with preserving this abundant and valuable information on the area's cultural heritage are not open to the public. We must embody the library's "public nature" by putting forward a means for the public to use these art documents that poses no risk of damage to the archived materials themselves.

Artistic and cultural heritage serve as a record of human life. As urban development has become more rapid, the original culture of Sandun, including three-dimensional arts, crafts, ancient architecture, and characteristics of traditional life, has disappeared. For example, local heritage protection efforts have been crucial in protecting the extant ancient river sites

of Sandun and related archival materials during the Sandun Wulitang River Heshui Township Reconstruction Project. Our Sandun local documentation initiative provided both historical and present-day engineering and technical parameters of the Sandun canal, including such information as shipping operations and river changes.

In terms of transforming materials into information resources, the Sandun Library has completed a great deal of follow-up work on the use value of these documents. For example, three local dramas, "Gold Seal Mountain," "The Main Pier," and "The Long Bridge," have been lost for eighty years. Professional specialists from the Sandun Library and workers from the Village government have spent a great deal of time and effort over a ten-year period paying several visits to the countryside to interview centenarians who would have had original knowledge of the dramas. Using all such means available to them, they recorded barely twenty musical scores. Through post-production digital expansion techniques, they were able to make the scores more complete, allowing the speaking and singing arts of the plays to be enjoyed by audiences once again.

With the revival of these ancient dramas, a single paper-based document can be transformed into all kinds of products: Sandun Vinyl Disks, Gold Seal scholar's studio travel, and Long Bridge Theater real estate – even multinational Long Bridge Theatre performances are all being planned. Allowing the non-material cultural heritage of each unique area to remain in the native cultural soil that sustains it will allow for an even better transmission and protection of these ephemeral arts. Zhejiang University established a presence in Sandun, and brought a cultural atmosphere to the district. The direction of Zhejiang University students' humanities research turned from the study of macro-regional culture to local culture research, even to the point that they have discovered and developed close personal relationships within the local community in which they have been immersed. Sandun is, in effect, a type of business card for Zhejiang.

Sandun culture is also concerned with "introducing from the outside" and "sending out into the world." The objective of "sending out into the world" is to foster international cultural exchange. "Introducing from the outside" refers to the standardization of management experience as it relates to cultural information. Arts research has its own disciplinary principles; it sets in motion the development and utilization of the attributes of regional art and culture, and creates new patterns of production. The preservation of artistic heritage brings to local documents/archive work a new impetus for the development of a new cultural competitiveness.

Local documents in the digital age

The most salient characteristics of the library's digitization of information are the virtual nature of digital transmission and the public nature of knowledge services. The acquisition and preservation of arts resources in a local documents collection go through a three-step process of materials selection and collection, processing, and preservation. These steps can be executed simultaneously or separately to complete the building of archival content. Especially in the processing stage, this influences how the organization and management of traditional paper archival art documents are defined. It has eased geographical restrictions related to documents storage, but at the same time enhanced our ability to control analog items at the local level. Network transmission speeds up the flow of information service, and makes resource sharing possible.

Inter-media technology in the protection of intangible cultural heritage

Inter-media technology is a new technology of digitization research and digital production data; it is known by its English abbreviation “SIMA.” “Inter-media” encompasses multimedia image, spatial synthesis, and digital simulation technologies. These three larger technologies support the diversity of local document protection. Inter-media technology integrates the overall character of sources with different material attributes, and from this overall character produces something unlike any of the parent materials, restoring fragments of historical memory and allowing the lifeblood of the culture to continue, and in so doing expands the ways in which traditional culture survives and develops. By means of education based in visual ephemera and digital experience, we can create a result of cultural resonance, and reconnect the links of a previously fractured culture.

Due to the integration of urban and rural construction, Chinese people are becoming increasingly indifferent to traditional history and culture. If the average person doesn't fully pay attention to Chinese festivals and seasonal observances, he is even more likely to forget his hometown folk customs and heritage; cultural heritage faces enormous critical challenges in this environment, and that local heritage is likely to be destroyed. Inter-media technology introduces the concept of inter-spatiality, using the full range of four-dimensional spatial simulation technology, so that the documentary nature of local archival materials will be elevated to the peak state of service experience.

“Ancient Panoramas of Sandun” is one of the important projects created out of the Sandun Local Documents Database. It displays that the process focuses on reflecting the return to history; it allows the user to wander through a garden amid the natural conditions and customs of the place and the habits of the local people. Now I can just lead you into the wonderful painting: the renowned and storied sign of Sandun's Rong-Shun Dye House, Zhu Taihe Garden, Qian Guangda Center, etc. You can virtually enter the Rong-Shun Dye House Store, and almost feel how wonderful the silk is; you can enjoy the flowers and sip tea at the Zhu Taihe Garden, or watch fish in the pond while listening to a reading at the garden's pavilion. Or you can visit the Qian Guangda district to play with antiques and paintings and watch people in all their varied activities.

Inter-media technology is capable of realizing the continuity of specific scenes and specific events. The form and style of local documents construction in Sandun is the cultural consciousness and confidence of the mainstream consciousness of Chinese politics.

The role of services in the fifth cultural space

Public culture is the fifth cultural space in the shared public sphere. Developing and fostering this public culture relies on extending this space outward, inter-mixing the elements of space and time, and approaching the limits of this space as the main axis of four-dimensional, multi-faceted, vital information services. Effective protection of artistic and cultural heritage requires that, in this fifth cultural space, we keep in step with the developing directions of local documents work.

Any artistic description of value is based on a fixed, objective material substance, and corresponds to the five-level axis of the fifth cultural space of the art protection environmental services. Art collection is, with regard to real-time information, a

comprehensive collection of data. Art information compiled and extracted from its own aesthetic space reflects the social conditions of the area, and general principles and methods can explain any gap or interruption of documents that may occur in this process.

With the development of the technology of cross-media production, we have demonstrated the visual experience of local documents, visual perception of the lived environment, and have also uncovered artistic resources. The production of local documents in Sandun is related to protective deep-level mining of artistic cultural heritage and cultural creative industries. The objects of these endeavors are the cultural relics, disappearing architectural complexes, marginalized art works, lost or soon-to-disappear crafts and cottage industry, light industry, and objects of daily use found in fragmentary form. We are utilizing internationally prevalent digital processing technologies to restore and reconstruct animation simulations, to restore two-dimensional graphics and modeling, and digitally document the reconstruction of scenic designs. The aforementioned technologies are: 3D simulation modeling technologies, sub-divided into those that utilize mesh modeling and those using Voxelization; grey-level co-occurrence of fragments; image enhancement; and edge calculation, etc.

Art preservation can be divided into digital preservation and the preservation of actual objects. The most important problem in art preservation is the clarification of the relationship between conservation and utilization. Art management entails preserving the underlying function of the object/phenomenon. When all regions of the world go to display their own cultural achievements, they are also participating in a “virtual culture” defensive skirmish in the scrambling for territory. In Sandun, people feel more and more that local documents archives and the enterprise of building a local artistic heritage is something done as a benefit to and service for the hometown community.

In order to produce a special issue of a local magazine on aspects of Sandun’s history, the Sandun History Research Institute consulted the documents archive. The magazine was well received, demonstrating how the archive is an important information resource for digital publications. It is not difficult for us to realize that the multiple forms of regional artistic culture influence the working format and types of services provided by local documents work.

The work structure and service characteristics of local documents and art protection

The diversity and complexity of regional culture makes the research work of art protection closer to ISO9002 standards, and modes of service are adjusted in the direction of being based on user needs.

In overall terms, the primary expression falls into the following areas: First, local documents intersect with the ecological changes of the art of each region, and place an emphasis on the mutual influence of the natural environment and documents examination. To illustrate this with real-life events, we turn to the summer of 2012, when treasure was unearthed at the Gouzhuang construction site in Yuhang, in Zhejiang Province. On a 50,000 foot-square mound in Sandun District, cultural artefacts appeared before our eyes. They included blue and white porcelain wares, ceramic objects, jades, etc. The Sandun Historical Institute took the lead, declaring in the headline of their report “Sandun Unearths Cultural Artefacts; Village Residents’ Reaction Intense.” This reflected a concrete manifestation of Sandun’s deep history and culture. The objective was to make the people of the district sense and experience that Sandun also has a cultural heritage of its own.

Second is the overall consideration given to the work of artistic heritage planning. The spirit of artistic culture must receive its rightful place in the library. Government funds could be a short-term solution to the documentation and dissemination of artistic heritage. In an environment driven by new technology, we should seek to maintain an appropriate balance of dynamic information and improve the ability of network operations so that the art of documents information and digital space coexist in a way that fosters the creation of a special new inter-media knowledge service.

The Renowned Individuals of Sandun Database covers ancient, modern, and contemporary people from all walks of life. Identified closely with a highly esteemed business established in 1845 (in the twenty-fourth year of the Daoguang reign era of the Qing dynasty), Sandun historically was known throughout the country by the phrase "Rong-Shun Dye Establishment." The most treasured item of the Town Hall is a 501-kilogram piece of Lake Tai rock, with the present-day market price of over 71 million *renminbi* (approximately USD 11 million). At present, the Chinese Silk Museum has a piece of Lake Tai stone, but it is suspected to be an imitation.

Regional cultural circles reflect local artistic cultural standards. In order to expand services, a local Sandun publisher, Sandun Culture and Education Printers, is publishing new editions of books with local characteristics and compiling educational materials in the areas of culture, art, and management technology to serve the needs of schools, work organizations, and individuals. Sandun Library and the Sandun Village government have created an alliance with Culture and Education Printers to elevate an ideology of disseminating works of art that cannot be replicated. They are taking hard-to-find, site-specific cultural objects and delivering them into the hands of the public through publications of the highest quality, providing a way for people to relieve stress in the fifth cultural space.

Third, the distinctively ethnic artistic character of local documents embodies an international cultural style. Every year, the Chen Family Bridge and Wulitang ancient architectural monuments attract those seeking out famous sites, like foreign tourists and backpackers, vacation visitors, and travelers, all coming to or passing through Sandun. When they leave Sandun, they are bound to take with them an eight-scene seal of Sandun, a miniature carving of the ancient bridge, or some such ornament. Sandun local documents transform artistic heritage into audiovisual, visual, and three-dimensional forms. They break asunder the normal constraints of space and time and bring a homogenous isomorphism to the pictorial and literary arts.

Sandun has also long revered master of Chinese national culture Zhang Taiyan. We can begin to excavate the true story of his life, education, and works from his place of birth, Sandun's Long Bridge district. Whether or not the Sandun documents archive will be able to seize this timely opportunity and establish physical protection of the sites and artefacts, publish documents, and digitally process "Sandun's Renowned Native Son, A Celebrity in Sandun" is a very difficult matter. We have already begun to feel the pressure of completing such a project.

Urban and rural cultural performance of regional art heritage

Sandun's Cloud Valley Innovation District was established in 2011; its focus is on projects related to information application services of local cultural heritage. The challenge in

launching artistic cultural heritage work in Sandun lies in having librarians, professional subject specialists, and archivists assume the professional responsibilities of local documents work. One example of this is the cultural artefact and heritage of the Sandun Millennium “Dragon Boat.” In addition to the documents that have been passed on to the present, there are also artistic works that will be created by later generations. Representative of this is the author’s own woodblock-printed document, “West Creek,” which serves as an example of the library’s archival material. The painting on paper, “Ancient Sandun,” serves as a representative work of fine arts.

The director of the Miami-Dade County Library, Raymond Santiago, said during a staff interview: “the work of library staff has nothing to do with books; it is concerned with readers.” This expression is entirely appropriate when applied to artistic cultural protection endeavors.

The question we are faced with is not what books themselves are or what they may become, but what artistic cultural heritage, in the process of being protected, and what documentary resources, after they have been preserved, will bring to users. In addition, oral history can be seen as a yellow-card warning in the realm of global libraries. Oral history is the final aspect of artistic cultural heritage protection work, and lies at the juncture of innovation of both culture and system.

It troubles me greatly that Sandun, with the rapid development of the city in the absence of good planning, might simply disappear in the next ten years. If that is the case, so too will all the culture, art, document-based resources, cultural landscapes, historical sites, languages, and even the native local peoples of the Sandun District themselves. The work of local documents and artistic cultural heritage protection shoulders the heavy responsibility of history.

Summary

In Sandun, we also need to protect Sandun Song dynasty Diamond-shaped Sesame Cakes (which were an official foodstuff of the Wenxing Ge Palace), the Chen Family Rong-Shun Dye Houses, the Dragon Boat Festival Dragon Boat Complex, the Plug-in Candles Complex, Sandun Bamboo Hats, the Zhu Taihe Store, Sandun Bamboo Shoots, Sandun Nanyang Dam Tofu Skin, Wulitang Mung Bean Noodles, Oil Mill Lane, Partition Wall art (painting), Folk Stove Painting, the Swinging Fish Ladle Fist Lantern style (a Ming dynasty martial arts style), Lantern Festival colored lanterns, Xialongwei Village, etc. These things all comprise the precious art and cultural heritage of the Sandun District.

Implementing the work of art and cultural heritage protection is quite difficult for library and museum staff. In every region of the world, the newfound emphasis on and significant development of art and cultural heritage present both opportunities and challenges for local documentation work. The protection of local artistic and cultural heritage has enhanced a sense of ethnic self-esteem and cohesiveness, and this has in turn proved instrumental to the sustainable development of regional and local archives.