

## Problems and Suggestions for the Cataloging of Ancient Books in Chinese Libraries (Postprint)

**Authors:** Yao Boyue

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### Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] Ancient book cataloging constitutes the core content and foundational task of ancient book preservation. Over the 13 years since the implementation of the “Chinese Ancient Book Preservation Plan,” significant progress has been achieved in ancient book cataloging across libraries in China; concurrently, numerous challenges have emerged. These issues demand adequate attention at the national level, necessitating timely and robust countermeasures for prompt resolution. [Method/Process] This study conducts a systematic analysis of these problems, delves into their root causes, and proposes solutions and methodologies. [Results/Conclusion] The forthcoming priority for ancient book preservation in China should pivot toward dedicated focus on ancient book cataloging. This entails refining and optimizing the national ancient book cataloging and dissemination system, intensifying specialized training for cataloging professionals, enhancing academic research and disciplinary development in ancient book cataloging, and ensuring the sustained, high-quality execution of cataloging endeavors.

### Full Text

## Problems and Suggestions in the Cataloging of Ancient Books in Chinese Libraries

**Yao Boyue**

Institute for the Preservation of Ancient Books, Tianjin Normal University,  
Tianjin 300387

### Abstract:

[Purpose/Significance] Cataloging of ancient books constitutes the core content and foundational work of ancient book preservation. Thirteen years after the implementation of the “China Ancient Books Preservation Plan,” significant progress has been made in the cataloging of ancient books in Chinese libraries,

yet numerous problems persist that warrant sufficient national attention, timely and forceful countermeasures, and prompt resolution. [Method/Process] This paper analyzes these problems individually to uncover their deep-seated causes and proposes pathways and methods for their solution. [Result/Conclusion] The next focal point of China's ancient book preservation efforts should shift to giving special attention to ancient book cataloging. We must improve and perfect the national ancient book cataloging and publishing system, strengthen the targeted training of ancient book cataloging personnel, enhance academic research and disciplinary construction in ancient book cataloging, and ensure that cataloging work continues with sustained high quality.

**Keywords:** library ancient book cataloging; cataloging format; cataloging rules; ancient book cataloging platform; ancient book retrieval platform

The cataloging of ancient books in libraries involves the identification, description, indexing, and processing of ancient book collections. It represents the core content and fundamental work of ancient book preservation—the process of revealing the form and content of ancient books and transforming disordered collections into ordered ones. Moreover, it serves as a prerequisite for collection management, reading room services, exhibitions, digitization, and facsimile publication.

It has been thirteen years since the Chinese government launched the “China Ancient Books Preservation Plan” in 2007. The plan's two major tasks—comprehensive inventory registration and the establishment of a catalog of precious ancient books—both fall within the scope of ancient book cataloging. Through the plan's implementation, libraries of all types nationwide have made considerable progress in ancient book cataloging. However, it would be blindly optimistic to assume that as the inventory registration work draws to a close, the cataloging of ancient books in libraries will be successfully completed. On the contrary, ancient book cataloging in Chinese libraries is currently in a state of crisis, facing numerous problems and even hidden dangers that urgently require high-level attention from preservation leadership, serious research, and practical solutions. Otherwise, the quality and level of ancient book preservation work will be greatly compromised, potentially rendering future preservation efforts unsustainable.

A CNKI search using “ancient book cataloging” as the subject term retrieved 197 articles: 15 from 1982–1989, 23 from 1990–1999, 67 from 2000–2009, and 92 from 2010–2019. While this appears to show a gradual upward trend, the overall picture reveals more general discussions than in-depth research, more specific case narratives than explorations of cutting-edge academic issues, and very few works with international perspective, critical thinking, and theoretical guidance. In 1988, Bao Guoqiang from the National Library of China's Ancient Books Department published “On the Principle of Objective Reflection in Ancient Book Cataloging” [1], which discussed the necessity of adopting objective reflection principles in the national standard “Rules for Cataloging Ancient Books” from the perspective of standardization. In 2003, Xie Qinfang, a research

librarian at Peking University Library, published “Preliminary Views on the Construction of Bibliographic Databases for Chinese Ancient Books” [2], which explored, from a decision-maker’s perspective, how to select metadata formats for ancient book bibliographic records in information technology and network environments, how to establish cataloging environments suited to the characteristics of ancient books, and how to achieve resource sharing. In 2011, Wang Guoqiang, a professor at Zhengzhou University’s Department of Information Management, published “Reflections on the Training of Personnel for Ancient Book Arrangement in Libraries” [3], which offered serious consideration of personnel training issues from the perspective of disciplinary construction, though without specifically addressing cataloging issues. These papers represent leading academic research achievements, yet regrettably, recent years have seen almost no such in-depth research on ancient book cataloging, indicating that the field suffers from a lack of successors and insufficient momentum, requiring special attention.

## 2. The Dilemma Facing Ancient Book Cataloging Work

Beneath the surface of vigorous inventory registration and precious ancient books cataloging, deeper examination reveals that ancient book cataloging in Chinese libraries has actually fallen into confusion, prominently manifested in the following aspects.

### 2.1 Uncertainty in Selecting Cataloging Formats and Rules

The current standard format for ancient book cataloging in Chinese libraries is the “Manual for Using CNMARC Format for Chinese Ancient Books” [4] based on CNMARC. However, apart from some large ancient book collection institutions, most library cataloging personnel do not understand MARC format and cannot or will not use their library’s CNMARC-based cataloging systems for ancient books. Currently, many libraries have outsourced their regular book cataloging operations and have even lost their in-house cataloging capabilities, making it even more difficult to demand CNMARC-based ancient book cataloging.

In March 1995, the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) in Dublin, Ohio, USA, proposed a set of metadata elements called “The Dublin Core Metadata Element Set” to describe online information. The Dublin Core (DC) metadata format, better adapted to network environments and technologies, integrates description and retrieval functions, enabling faster, simpler object description and more convenient retrieval through simple, intuitive interfaces, and quickly gained worldwide application. DC metadata has significantly influenced ancient book cataloging in China. The cultural industry standard “Ancient Books Metadata Specifications” [5] released in April 2014, and the “National Library of China Ancient Books Metadata Specifications and Cataloging Rules” [6] published the same year as part of the “National Digital Library Project Standards

and Specifications,” both base their cataloging elements on extended DC metadata. In practice, the “University Ancient Documents Resource Database” created by CALIS in 2006 and the “National Ancient Books Census Platform” built by the National Center for the Preservation of Ancient Books in 2009 were also designed based on DC metadata. However, DC metadata has not gained universal acceptance in China’s library ancient book cataloging community. People only passively implement its concepts and methods on these two cataloging systems and do not know how to implement them concretely once outside these systems.

In addition to these two formats, many small and medium-sized libraries have not yet implemented computer-based retrospective cataloging and still use traditional card catalogs, printed catalogs, or self-made Excel tables with traditional cataloging methods, resulting in diverse and inconsistent practices.

Under the influence of international trends in bibliographic cataloging rules, the national standard “Rules for Cataloging Ancient Books” has adhered to the principle of objective reflection since its initial version (GB/T 3792.7-87) [7] and further introduced the principle of complete description in its revised version (GB/T 3792.7-2008) [8] to facilitate standardization and international sharing of ancient book bibliographic records. However, these practices neither conform to traditional ancient book cataloging conventions nor are fully applicable to other ancient book cataloging formats beyond MARC, creating the awkward situation where the national standard is rarely applied in practice.

The multiplicity of cataloging formats, the lack of unified cataloging rules, and the confusion about which formats and rules to adopt at the outset of cataloging have led to chaotic thinking in library ancient book cataloging and resulted in arbitrary practices in actual bibliographic compilation.

## **2.2 Failure to Closely Follow International Developments in Bibliographic Cataloging, Leading to Stagnant Concepts and Technical Methods**

Outside China, many countries—including Western nations, Japan, Korea, and even Vietnam—hold collections of Chinese ancient books but severely lack personnel capable of cataloging them, often needing to hire Chinese experts. These experts can only use internationally accepted cataloging formats and rules locally. In fact, after long-term pragmatic bibliographic cataloging, Western cataloging scholars have gradually recognized the limitations of traditional Western cataloging concepts and methods and are shifting toward academic cataloging that emphasizes the value of bibliographic records themselves and hierarchical relationships between records—approaches increasingly resembling the “distinguishing academic traditions and examining intellectual origins” advocated by Chinese Qing Dynasty bibliographer Zhang Xuecheng.

In 1998, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) released “Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records” (FRBR),

which, drawing on the “entity-attribute-relationship” model commonly used in relational databases, reveals bibliographic record functions through research on entities, attributes, and relationships. FRBR transformed the traditional flat structure of bibliographic records and sought to establish relationships between bibliographic records and among cataloging objects within records. The FRBR concept led to the emergence of RDA.

RDA (Resource Description and Access) is the upgraded version of AACR II (Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, Second Edition). Based on FRBR theory and developed in response to the digital environment, it represents the latest international cataloging rules designed to meet new requirements for resource description and retrieval in the digital era and to become the universal standard for the digital world. In January 2008, the Library of Congress, the British Library, and Library and Archives Canada jointly established the RDA/MARC Working Group. Under its vigorous promotion, library cataloging systems in Europe and America have widely adopted RDA cataloging principles and methods in recent years [10].

In May 2011, the Library of Congress collaborated with Zepheira, a company specializing in semantic technologies, to develop BIBFRAME (The Bibliographic Framework Initiative), also known as the “Bibliographic Framework Transition Initiative.” Its development aims to support the conversion of billions of MARC records and gradually replace various MARC formats currently used worldwide, including MARC 21, enabling bibliographic data to be conveniently exchanged, published, and shared across the entire Internet [11]. BIBFRAME is currently undergoing continuous exploration and improvement and may well completely replace the moribund MARC format in the near future.

The evolution from FRBR to RDA to BIBFRAME demonstrates that the international library community has been continuously seeking more scientific and rational cataloging methods, which will inevitably affect how libraries worldwide catalog their Chinese ancient book collections. However, few in China’s library ancient book cataloging community currently pay attention to this international transformation, remaining almost completely detached, let alone researching countermeasures or exploring what role China should play. This situation contrasts sharply with the proactive learning from international bibliographic cataloging experience and striving toward international standards that characterized Chinese ancient book cataloging two or three decades ago, indicating a dangerous tendency toward complacency and stagnation in the current Chinese library ancient book cataloging community.

### 2.3 Lack of Consensus on Classification System Selection

The greatest drawback of the traditional Chinese four-part classification system is that it never produced an independent classification scheme; classification methods always remained attached to specific bibliographic catalogs. Consequently, even the once-authoritative “Siku Quanshu Zongmu” classification can-

not be used to classify all Chinese ancient books. Since the Republican era, some libraries have compiled their own classification systems based on the traditional four-part method, but these are limited to their own collections and lack universality and authority.

With the introduction and spread of Western culture since modern times, the traditional jing-shi-zi-ji (classics, history, philosophy, literature) four-part classification has become inadequate. The simplest solution has been to add new categories to the four-part system. For instance, Zhang Zhidong's "Shumu Dawen" from the late Qing added a "congshu" (collectanea) section, creating a five-part classification. In 1899, Li Zhaowei's "Catalogue of the Imperial University" added a "Western learning" section, forming a six-part classification. The "National Ancient Books Census Registration Manual (Provisional)" issued in 2009 also adopted this six-part method, dividing all extant Chinese ancient books into six categories: classics, history, philosophy, literature, collectanea, and new learning. The manual's first chapter, "Scope of Ancient Books Census Registration," explicitly states: "All manuscripts, handwritten copies, printed editions, and rubbings produced before 1912, including bamboo and silk texts, Dunhuang manuscripts, Song, Liao, Western Xia, Jin, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasty printed and handwritten books, ancient maps, rubbings, ancient books in minority scripts, and new learning books produced after the introduction of Western learning, all fall within the scope of ancient books census registration." This provision clearly includes pre-1912 printed new learning books within the census scope. The six-part classification appended to the manual, while not attached to a specific bibliography, employs no modern classification techniques and is not an independent, complete classification system in the full sense.

Another approach has been to learn from Western classification methods and reclassify Chinese ancient books according to the Western academic system. For example, during the Republican period, the internationally used Dewey Decimal Classification was introduced to classify Chinese books, resulting in over 30 classification schemes that imitated, supplemented, or modified Dewey. These systems aimed to uniformly classify ancient and modern Chinese books and integrate Chinese ancient books into new classification systems. Many libraries founded in the late Qing and Republican periods still use such classification methods for ancient books. For instance, Peking University Library uses Pi Gaopin's "Chinese Decimal Classification" for its ancient book collection, while the original Yenching University Library collection at Peking University retains the classification numbers from Qiu Kaiming's "Chinese-Japanese Book Classification." In fact, using these classification systems based on Western scientific disciplines to classify Chinese ancient books is extremely difficult and problematic, often forcing inadequate solutions.

After 1949, new classification systems guided by Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought emerged, such as the "Renmin University Library Book Classification," "Chinese Academy of Sciences Library Book Classification," and "Chinese Library Classification" (CLC). Among them, CLC has proven the most suitable

current classification system in China, officially approved as a national standard trial version in 1981, widely used in Chinese libraries, and continuously revised, now in its fifth edition. However, like the various decimal classification systems from the Republican period, these are based on modern Western disciplinary systems and cannot appropriately classify Chinese ancient books, making them rarely used for ancient book classification.

The difficulty of classification system selection is further complicated by the fact that classification systems are often linked to collection numbers, and changing classification systems inevitably involves changing collection numbers—a fundamental transformation that libraries dare not undertake lightly. Consequently, adhering to established practices has become the norm for ancient book classification. However, the chaotic and inconsistent selection of classification systems has created significant difficulties and hidden troubles for ancient book preservation work in libraries.

### **3. Issues in the Construction of Ancient Book Cataloging and Retrieval Platforms**

In the new era of digital ancient book cataloging, establishing cataloging systems is crucial. America's OCLC (Online Computer Library Center) encompasses cataloging data for various documentary information resources in North America and many other countries, becoming the world's largest documentary information cataloging platform. Many Chinese ancient books held by foreign libraries are cataloged on this platform and published on its WorldCat platform. As a socialist country, China possesses tremendous advantages in integrating resources, yet paradoxically, it has no unified cataloging and publishing platform for documentary resources, and the same holds true for ancient book cataloging.

#### **3.1 Lack of a Perfect, Open, and Nationally Applicable Ancient Book Cataloging Platform**

China currently has no nationally applicable library collection resource cataloging system similar to OCLC. The CALIS Union Catalog is limited to universities, and neither the national public library system nor other library systems have established internet-based joint cataloging platforms for collection information resources. In ancient book cataloging, CALIS's "University Ancient Documents Resource Database" has achieved great success within universities. However, due to the discontinuation of the "211" project, it lacks follow-up momentum, currently comprising only 30 member institutions at home and abroad, and its database system is gradually becoming technologically outdated and poorly maintained, awaiting continued investment, expansion, and technological improvement.

Although the National Center for the Preservation of Ancient Books built a "National Ancient Books Census Platform" as early as 2009, its complex format and various usage restrictions have resulted in limited functionality and impact, pre-

venting it from becoming a unified working platform for ancient book cataloging across libraries.

### **3.2 Need to Establish a National Union Catalog Retrieval System Based on a Joint Cataloging Platform**

On October 10, 2014, the “National Ancient Books Census Registration Basic Database” officially launched. By the end of 2018, it had published 672,467 census records totaling 6,541,261 volumes from 169 institutions nationwide. Theoretically, this database should serve as the external publishing platform for the previously established “National Ancient Books Census Platform.” However, according to authoritative statistics, by the end of 2018, the national ancient books census registration work had accumulated 2.6 million bibliographic records from 2,315 institutions—far exceeding the 672,467 records from 169 institutions published in the “National Ancient Books Census Registration Basic Database.” This indicates that the “National Ancient Books Census Registration Basic Database” cannot yet be considered a comprehensive external publishing platform for the “National Ancient Books Census Platform” and does not reflect the full scope of achievements in the national ancient books census since 2007.

### **3.3 Many Small and Medium-Sized Libraries Fail to Provide Online Retrievable Electronic Bibliographic Records for Their Ancient Book Collections**

Small and medium-sized libraries with collections of fewer than 100,000 ancient books generally lack the capacity for CNMARC-based ancient book cataloging. These libraries either remain at the stage of traditional card or printed catalogs or compile Excel-format bibliographic records only for in-library patron retrieval. The inability to retrieve ancient book bibliographic records online severely restricts the broad and effective utilization of these collections across society.

## **4. Issues in Talent Cultivation and Discipline Construction for Ancient Book Cataloging**

Across China and even worldwide, the number of personnel engaged in Chinese ancient book cataloging is not increasing but decreasing. The older generation of ancient book catalogers is gradually disappearing, new personnel are not being recruited, academic research on ancient book cataloging remains 低迷 (depressed) with scarce achievements, and the important position of ancient book cataloging in ancient book preservation is not recognized. The prospects for China’s ancient book cataloging work are concerning.

#### **4.1 Declining Number of Ancient Book Cataloging Staff and Lack of Successors**

Nationally and globally, China currently suffers from a severe shortage of ancient book cataloging personnel, with high-level experts being extremely rare. During the implementation of the “China Ancient Books Preservation Plan,” numerous training sessions were held, many focusing on ancient book cataloging, which played a positive role in implementing census registration work. However, cultivating ancient book cataloging talent cannot be accomplished overnight. Cataloging requires knowledge of philology, cultural history, ancient book bibliography, bibliographic cataloging competencies, understanding of the latest developments in domestic and international cataloging methods, and mastery of cataloging rules, techniques, subject indexing, and classification—comprehensive expertise that is difficult to develop without systematic university education.

Since 2014, the National Center for the Preservation of Ancient Books has recognized the long-term and standardized nature of talent cultivation and has supported the establishment of professional master’s degree programs in ancient book preservation at multiple higher education institutions, graduating several cohorts with certain results. However, current curricula in these programs devote insufficient attention to ancient book cataloging, making it difficult to cultivate students with the willingness and genuine competence to engage in ancient book cataloging work, and failing to reverse the dangerous situation of talent scarcity and potential discontinuation.

#### **4.2 Lack of Disciplinary Support for Ancient Book Cataloging and Seriously Lagging Textbook Development**

Talent cultivation for ancient book cataloging must begin with disciplinary construction. However, the Ministry of Education’s disciplinary catalog contains no specific discipline for ancient book preservation; it only appears as a sub-discipline or professional master’s direction in relevant departments of some higher education institutions. Ancient book cataloging can at best become a sub-direction within these programs, with extremely limited course hours, creating enormous difficulties for training professionals.

Textbook development for ancient book cataloging is also urgently needed. The only available textbooks are “Library Ancient Book Cataloging” (1985), jointly compiled by the Library Science Departments of Peking University and Wuhan University and published by Zhonghua Book Company, and “Library Ancient Book Arrangement” (1986), compiled by Liao Yantang and Cao Zhi and internally published by Wuhan University’s School of Library and Information Science. Their outdated content no longer meets current needs. In the more than 30 years since these two publications, no new ancient book cataloging textbooks or monographs have been published—an extremely abnormal phenomenon.

## 5. Reflections and Suggestions on Ancient Book Cataloging Issues

In response to the above problems, the author offers the following suggestions after careful consideration.

### 5.1 On the Selection and Improvement of Ancient Book Cataloging Formats

Ancient book cataloging should keep pace with the times. Chinese ancient book cataloging experts must not be blind and deaf, content with their limited perspective; they should timely understand the latest developments in international documentary information resource cataloging, actively participate in foreign research, integrate themselves into the international bibliographic cataloging community, and earn the respect of international colleagues with unique perspectives and judgments. They should strive to gain discursive power over Chinese ancient book cataloging methods internationally to ensure that Chinese ancient books held in foreign libraries receive proper arrangement and utilization.

The future direction of Chinese ancient book cataloging may ultimately abandon MARC format and may not necessarily adopt RDA. The best approach would be to attempt a leapfrog development by directly transitioning to BIBFRAME or other more advanced models, forging a path more suited to the characteristics of Chinese ancient books and better adapted to modern computer network technologies. Ancient book cataloging experts should strengthen communication, interaction, and cooperation with bibliographic cataloging experts, conduct relevant research, and adopt internationally informed cataloging concepts and technologies to design convincing Chinese solutions for ancient book cataloging and achieve international co-construction and sharing of ancient book cataloging data.

### 5.2 On the Application of Classification Systems

Since neither the traditional Chinese four-part classification system nor various new classification systems including CLC can adequately meet the classification needs of extant Chinese ancient books, can we find another way forward?

With the deepening of ancient books census work, the content of China's ancient books has been basically comprehensively grasped. At the national level, we could organize experts to conduct thorough demonstrations and, on this basis, compile a "Chinese Ancient Books Classification System" as a national standard. This is a major issue related to the long-term stability of China's ancient book preservation work and should now be placed on the agenda. In the 1990s, when teaching at Peking University's Department of Information Management, the author compiled a "Chinese Ancient Books Classification System" that integrated the strengths of the four-part system and CLC, which, though never officially published, represented a bold and beneficial attempt.

### 5.3 On the Construction and Transformation of Ancient Book Cataloging and Publishing Platforms

The Ministry of Culture's "13th Five-Year Plan for National Ancient Books Preservation" clearly states: "Establish a comprehensive Chinese ancient books information database, promptly input census data from various preservation institutions, improve import and export functions, accelerate the construction of a national union catalog retrieval system, promptly publish census results, and achieve open sharing of ancient books census data nationwide" [13]. This is an extremely wise directive. As 2020 marks the final year of the 13th Five-Year Plan, timely and concentrated efforts on constructing the comprehensive Chinese ancient books information database and the national union catalog retrieval system could fulfill the plan's objectives.

The author suggests considering policy improvements and work method reforms to transform the existing "National Ancient Books Census Platform" into a unified, user-friendly, open ancient book cataloging platform for all types of libraries and even private collectors nationwide. Currently, besides manual cataloging or copy cataloging, the system allows batch import and export of various formats including MARC and Excel. In the future, this strength could be fully utilized by allowing ancient book collection units to batch import or export their bibliographic records with the cooperation of the system's management center. The National Center for the Preservation of Ancient Books could establish a separate development and maintenance management agency for this system or commission a company for commercial operation. If realized, this proposal could not only unify China's ancient book cataloging work on one platform but also fundamentally solve the dilemmas of format and rule selection, classification and subject indexing issues, and the applicability of cataloging systems for libraries of all types and sizes, achieving a permanent and stable solution.

Simultaneously, the existing "National Ancient Books Census Registration Basic Database" should be truly transformed into an external publishing platform for the "National Ancient Books Census Platform," continuously and synchronously reflecting the complete picture of national ancient books census achievements since 2007.

### 5.4 On Talent Cultivation and Discipline Construction for Ancient Book Cataloging

First, the National Center for the Preservation of Ancient Books should initiate a survey to determine how many libraries currently have ancient book cataloging business groups or positions and how many full-time ancient book cataloging staff exist nationwide. Mastering this data is crucial for future talent cultivation.

Second, we should strengthen publicity and promotion of ancient book cataloging work, publicizing catalogers like we do book conservators—highlighting the importance of their work, their achievements, and their noble qualities. We must elevate the academic status of ancient book cataloging personnel, improve

their treatment, and make ancient book cataloging a respected and admired profession. Only then can we change the current predicament where novices cannot do the work and experts are unwilling to, channeling the best ancient book preservation talent to cataloging positions to ensure quality and guarantee that precious Chinese cultural classics receive long-term care from truly knowledgeable professionals.

Third, we must strengthen research on the disciplinary construction of ancient book cataloging. What position does ancient book cataloging hold in ancient book preservation? What kind of scholarship is ancient book cataloging? Can it become a discipline? What are its research objects, content, and methods? What are its relationships with bibliography, catalog science, bibliographic cataloging, classification systems, and subject indexing? What is its relationship with modern information technology? Where are its greatest difficulties and most prominent problems? Few have researched these fundamental questions, let alone the overall construction of ancient book cataloging as a discipline. Chinese library ancient book cataloging work lacks authoritative theoretical guidance and adequate academic research and discussion—a situation that must change quickly.

In October 2019, with strong support from the Tianjin Municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau, the National Center for the Preservation of Ancient Books, and the China Ancient Books Preservation Association, the Institute for the Preservation of Ancient Books at Tianjin Normal University held an advanced training course titled “Ancient Book Cataloging in Libraries from an International Perspective.” Inspired by this course, the National Center for the Preservation of Ancient Books has begun considering establishing a number of “National Ancient Book Cataloging Centers” and several ancient book identification and cataloging apprenticeship institutes nationwide to leverage the individual strengths of senior catalogers and experienced cataloging backbones from public and private collections, thereby strengthening and promoting talent cultivation.

Simultaneously, leveraging the National Library of China’s current roles as IFLA’s Preservation and Conservation Center for China and OCLC’s cataloging core library, we should establish a series of projects to seriously study issues related to international integration of ancient book cataloging and strive to improve the academic level of ancient book cataloging research.

In contrast to the flourishing scene of China’s ancient book preservation cause since the 2007 implementation of the “China Ancient Books Preservation Plan,” ancient book cataloging in Chinese libraries shows a gradual decline overall, with inconsistent cataloging formats and rules, lack of consensus on classification, failure to effectively establish national cataloging and publishing platforms, severe talent shortages, and inadequate attention to talent cultivation and disciplinary construction. We must recognize that library ancient book cataloging is like rowing upstream—ceaseless effort is required to prevent backsliding. The next focus of China’s ancient book preservation should shift to special attention on cata-

logging, producing achievements while building capacity. We must improve and perfect the national library ancient book cataloging platform and its publishing system, strengthen the targeted training of ancient book cataloging personnel, enhance academic research and disciplinary construction in ancient book cataloging, lay a solid foundation for the sustained high-quality development of library ancient book cataloging work, and provide perpetual momentum for China's ancient book preservation cause.

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