

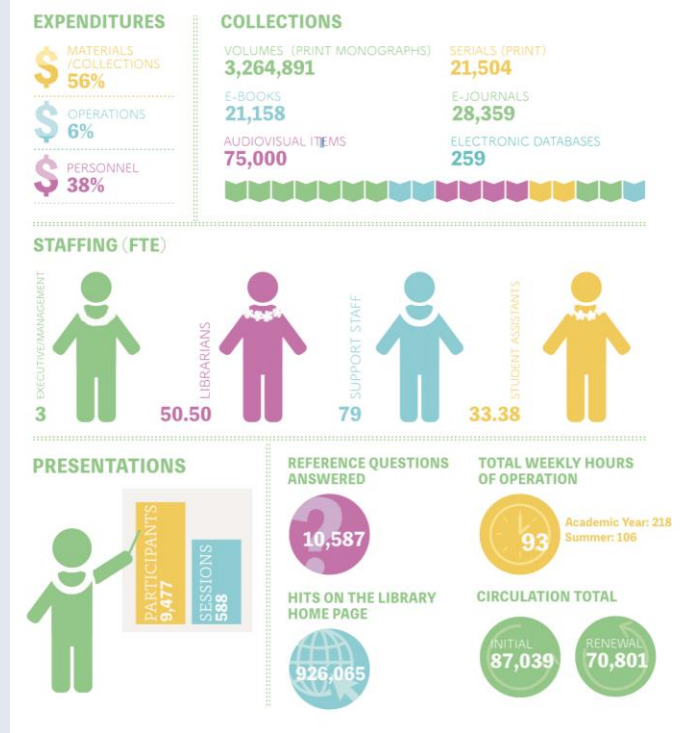
Bridging Korean Studies Librarianship and Digital Humanities: Challenges and Solutions from the University of Hawaii Library–National Institute of Korean History Collaborative Digitization Project.

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Hamilton Library, University of Hawaii (UH)



Lessons from Cross-Border Collaboration

Me, getting ready to make the same bad choice but also being a little more prepared from the last time it backfired.



Image source: [Reddit /r/memes](https://www.reddit.com/r/memes)

Chungch'uwŏn 중추원

- 1910: Korea–Japan merger treaty → start of Japanese colonial rule (35 years)
- Japan governed through the Japanese Government-General of Korea (조선총독부)
- Chungch'uwŏn: advisory body with pro-Japanese Korean appointees
- Used to gain insight into Korean customs & support smoother colonial rule

Chungch'uwŏn Collection

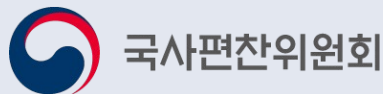
- Created to support Japanese colonial rule by documenting Korean society
- Covered customs, folklore, politics, social systems, daily life, and history
- Materials are manuscript reports, not published books
- Written by officials and submitted to the Chungch'uwŏn
- Most documents were intended to be destroyed after Japan's defeat in 1945
- Today, approx. 7,600 volumes are known to exist
 - National Institute of Korean History holds approx. 4,400
 - University of Hawai'i Library holds approx. 400 (3rd largest collection)



Chungch'uwŏn Collection-Value

- Rich primary source documenting Korean society and daily life under colonial rule
Essential for historical research—offers in-depth, firsthand data
- Used by Japan for colonial administration and law-making
Valuable for studying early 20th-century Korean and Japanese legal systems
Influences seen in modern Korean civil law even post-1945
- Frequently used by scholars worldwide at Hamilton Library

National Institute of Korean History



- Project initiated after a 2022 visit from researchers at the National Institute of Korean History (NK)
- NK: government-affiliated agency under Korea's Ministry of Education, led entirely by trained historians
- Their mission: collect and digitize Korean historical materials held overseas
- NK owns over half of all known Chungchuwon volumes and has already digitized their entire collection
- Provides open access to images and select translations through a public database
- Goal: create a unified digital archive by including materials held in Japan, the U.S., and beyond



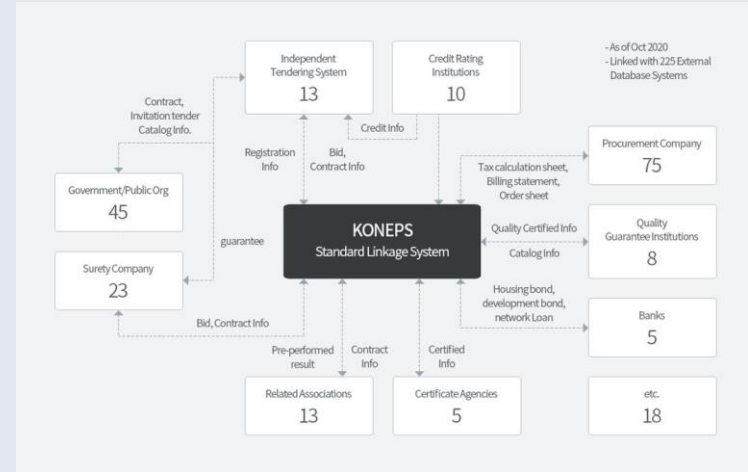
Project Timeline

- **Oct 2022:** NK researchers visit UH Library to assess Chungch'uwŏn Collection
- **Jan 2023:** Preservation team conducts condition assessment; shipping deemed unsuitable
- **Feb 2023:** Condition report shared with UH–NK project team
- **Jul 2023:** Conservation training held at UH Library with experts from NK & Gangoji Institute (Japan)
- **Oct 2023:** UH University Librarian visits NK to sign MOA
- **Nov 2023 – Oct 2024:** In-house digitization; files and metadata shared in batches
- **Jun 2024:** 6TB dark archive created for long-term preservation; NK collection (1,069 vols) added
- **Oct 2024:** Digitization of entire collection completed
- **Jan 2025:** Full collection uploaded to UH digital repository

External Challenges

KONEPS: South Korea's E-Procurement System

- UH digitizes, NK covers costs
- Contract required → NK requests bidding via KONEPS
- UH needed biz registration, bid bond, supplier docs
- Process too complex for U.S. institution
- Found exemption: under ₩20M = no KONEPS
- NK paid individuals, not UH
- Was it clean? Not exactly—gray area, but effective



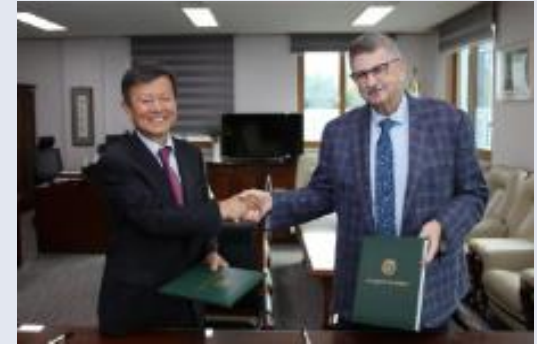
External Challenges

MOA and Legal Complexities

- Legal terms differ between Korean and U.S. systems
- Translation nuances affected interpretation of agreements
- Different views on scope of responsibility for UH Library
- UH Policy Issue:

All international MOAs must be signed by UH President, not departments

Library coordinated with UH administration to justify and approve the project



External Challenges

Communication Barriers in Korean Government Agencies

- Initial NK team ≠ team that executed the project
- Handover between teams was incomplete → led to misunderstandings
- Korean gov't agencies rotate staff every 1–2 years
- Frequent changes in project contacts created inconsistency

External Challenges

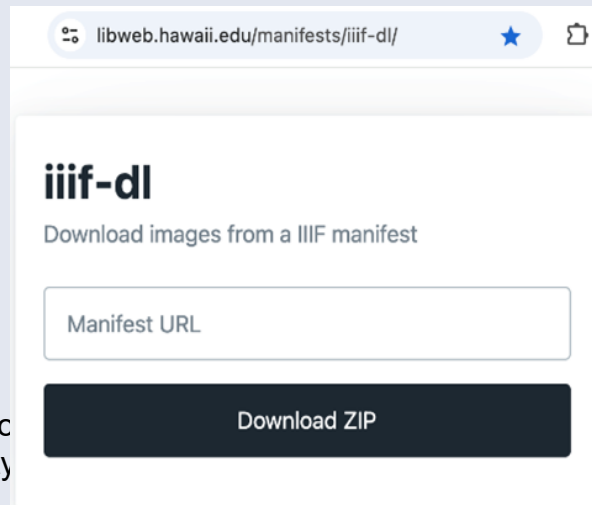
Technical Challenge: Which Format Do We Want?

- UH used Pyramid TIFFs (~100MB) for preservation
- NK requested JPEGs (~10MB) to match existing collection
- ~100,000 images → dual-format output infeasible
- Institutional priority gap:

UH → preservation

NK → content access

- UH proposed sharing IIIF manifest URIs
- NK hesitant due to unfamiliarity with IIIF
- Solution: UH built a simple web tool for NK to paste URIs and download
- Result: Both sides received formats they needed, with interoperability



Internal Challenges

Workflow



PRESERVATION

Pre-processing
(Treating 293
volumes)



Digital Lab

Digitizing
(Entire collection—
418 volumes,
99,349 images in total)



PRESERVATION

Post-processing
(Reboxing 158
volumes)

Internal Challenges

Preservation Difficulties

- Preservation team hesitant to treat severely corroded volumes
 - Limited experience with East Asian materials (e.g. Washi paper, traditional bindings)
 - Requested relaxed standards due to workload and staffing issues
 - Fragile untreated items created risks for Digital Lab equipment
 - Solution: Hosted East Asian paper conservation workshop
-
- Invited experts from NK (Korea) & Gangoji Institute (Japan)
 - Shared techniques specific to Chungch'uwŏn-style materials



Fig. 14 (vol. 250). Yellow indicates stuck pages.



Fig. 12 (vol. 248). Light blue indicates severe deterioration with losses.



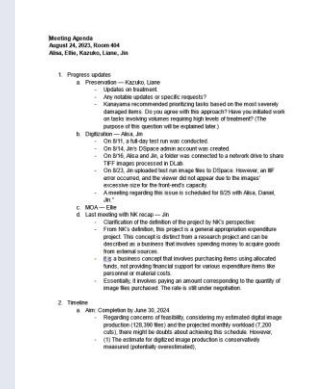
Fig. 13 (vol. 313). Light blue indicates severe deterioration with losses. White indicates mold.



Internal Challenges

Cross-Department Communication

- Coordination needed across: Public services, IT, Preservation, and Digital Lab
- Differing workflows and expectations caused friction
- Solution: Monthly cross-team meetings enabled ongoing adjustment
- Solution: Shared Master Inventory tracked item status and progress
- Result: Improved mutual understanding and collaboration



Today is 1/12/2025		468 days have passed since the project start date.	
1st Month (Oct 2 - Nov 1)			
61 volumes	(11,379 img files)	are photoshot(captured).	*the data of volumes taken before the
42 volumes	(7,722 img files)	are digitally processed.	*the data of volumes taken before the
16 volumes	(2,755 img files)	are submitted to NK.	
2nd Month (Nov 2 - Dec 1)			
70 volumes	(10,420 img files)	are photoshot(captured).	
62 volumes	(9,875 img files)	are digitally processed.	
70 volumes	(12,480 img files)	are submitted to NK.	
3rd Month (Dec 2 - Jan 1)			
72 volumes	(14,007 img files)	are photoshot(captured).	
70 volumes	(12,488 img files)	are digitally processed.	
37 volumes	(4,767 img files)	are submitted to NK.	
4th Month (Jan 2 - Feb 1)			
56 volumes	(15,738 img files)	are photoshot(captured).	
52 volumes	(11,708 img files)	are digitally processed.	
0 volumes	(0 img files)	are submitted to NK.	
5th Month (Feb 2 - Mar 1)			
35 volumes	(9,725 img files)	are photoshot(captured).	
35 volumes	(9,993 img files)	are digitally processed.	
0 volumes	(0 img files)	are submitted to NK.	

Project Achievements

Digitization & Access

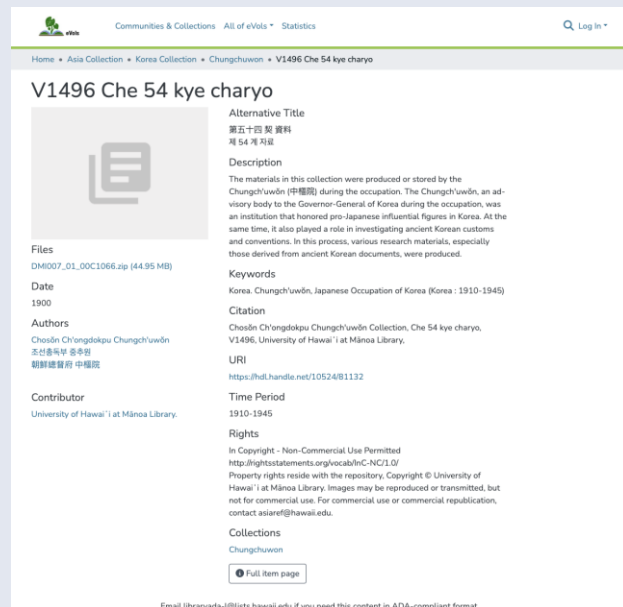
- 418 volumes digitized
- Available on eVols platform
- Actively used by researchers; supports future scholarship

International Collaboration & Funding

- Partnership with Korea improved project quality
- Strengthened global academic networks
- Secured funding—a model for future projects

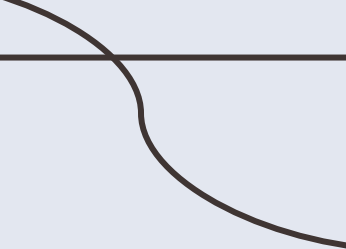
Innovation & Process Improvements

- Introduced new workflows (e.g., bidding system)
- Staff trained in East Asian book conservation
- Enhanced cross-departmental understanding



The screenshot displays the eVols platform interface. At the top, navigation links include 'Communities & Collections', 'All of eVols', and 'Statistics'. A search bar and 'Log in' link are on the right. The breadcrumb trail reads: 'Home > Asia Collection > Korea Collection > Chungchwon > V1496 Che 54 kye charyo'. The main title is 'V1496 Che 54 kye charyo'. Below it is a placeholder image for a document. The 'Files' section shows 'DM007_01_00C1066.zip (44.95 MB)'. The 'Date' is '1900'. The 'Authors' section lists 'Chosŏn Ch'ongdokpu Chungch'wŏn' and '朝鮮總督府 中樞院'. The 'Contributor' is 'University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Library'. The 'Alternative Title' is '第五十四 契 資料' and '제 54 계 자료'. The 'Description' states: 'The materials in this collection were produced or stored by the Chungch'wŏn (中樞院) during the occupation. The Chungch'wŏn, an advisory body to the Governor-General of Korea during the occupation, was an institution that honored pro-Japanese influential figures in Korea. At the same time, it also played a role in investigating ancient Korean customs and conventions. In this process, various research materials, especially those derived from ancient Korean documents, were produced.' The 'Keywords' are 'Korea, Chungch'wŏn, Japanese Occupation of Korea (Korea : 1910-1945)'. The 'Citation' is 'Chosŏn Ch'ongdokpu Chungch'wŏn Collection, Che 54 kye charyo, V1496, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Library.' The 'URI' is 'https://hdl.handle.net/10524/81132'. The 'Time Period' is '1910-1945'. The 'Rights' section states: 'In Copyright - Non-Commercial Use Permitted', 'http://rightsstatements.org/vocab/InC-NC/1.0/', 'Property rights reside with the repository. Copyright © University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Library. Images may be reproduced or transmitted, but not for commercial use. For commercial use or commercial republication, contact asiane@hawaii.edu.' The 'Collections' section lists 'Chungchwon'. A 'Full item page' button is at the bottom. A footer note says: 'Email libraryada-@lists.hawaii.edu if you need this content in ADA-compliant format.'





Mahalo
