Library Alphabet Soup: Tips and Resources When the Item in Hand is Not Written in the Latin Alphabet

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AACRL/CUS Best Practices Session #2
Thursday, April 14, 2016
Alabama Library Association Annual Convention
Gadsden, Alabama
What is the aim of this presentation?

- Tips and resources related to foreign language items (especially gifts)
- Suggestions for identifying languages with non-Latin writings systems
- Suggestions for finding OCLC records of items not in the Latin alphabet.
Our Favorite Helps in Time of Need

• ISBN/ISSN
  These numbers are the most common help with these situations. (Although there are times when they are not sufficient!)

• Colleagues who know the languages

But what if these options are not available?
What do I do when I have an item in hand that is not in the Latin alphabet?

1. Identify the alphabet/writing system

2. Identify the specific language

3. Search for OCLC records in WorldCat for the item and use that information to help make a decision for selection purposes

4. Share the OCLC information with the cataloging librarians.
Tip #1: Look up the Writing System

Online and/or print resources for identifying the alphabet or other writing system.

Resources:

- Wikipedia article on writing systems

Examples of print resources:


Answer: There are two languages here!
Tip #2: Same alphabet does not mean the same language

- Most alphabets/writing systems are shared by more than one language.
- Remember this example: Dutch and English have same alphabet.
- Identify the writing system, THEN identify the specific language.
Tip #3: Look for place of publication to help identify a language

• Make a list of possible languages

• The city of publication can often help ID the language.

• Check the names of capitals and other major cities & see how they are written in the language.

Resource:
• Wikipedia usually gives the name of a city as it is written in the native language(s).
Is it Russian?

It uses the Cyrillic alphabet, but a number of other languages use this alphabet too.

- Ukrainian
- Belarusian
- Serbo-Croatian
- Bulgarian
- Kurdish
- Tajik
- And many more!!

Maybe if I look for major cities (capitals) in some of these places I will find a match!
Yes! We have a match!

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

This article is about the capital of Ukraine. For other uses, see Kiev (disambiguation).

Kiev (ˈkiːf, -sv/) or Kyiv (Ukrainian: Київ [ki⁽ʲ⁾iv], Russian: Киев [ˈkiʲf] or Киев) is the capital of Ukraine and the most populous city of the country. It is situated on the Dnieper River. The population in July 2013 was 2,847,200[1] (though higher estimated n

**Kiev** is the capital of **Ukraine** and its name is written in **Ukrainian** on the title page. So it is safe to believe that this book is in **Ukrainian**
Tip #4: Learn the unique letters or characters of the language(s) you often encounter

It is not necessary to:
• Take language classes
• Become an accomplished reader of the language

Learn to spot the key identifiers
• Does the language have any letters not found in other languages using same alphabet?
• Are there any features that distinguish the written language(s)?
Chinese, Japanese, or Korean?

Chinese uses traditional or simplified versions of its logographic characters.

Ex. 三体："地球往事"三部曲之一

Japanese and Korean both use traditional Chinese characters together with their own particular writing systems.

Learning to recognize **Hiragana** and **Katakana** helps to identify this language as **Japanese**.

Citation for this publication is provided on handout.
Example: Russian, Ukrainian, or Belarusian?
Look for the unique letters.
Ukrainian’s unique letters: Є е & І і

– Unique letters do not always ID the language for certain
– Make note of the most common languages that you will have to distinguish
  Ex. Russian vs. Ukrainian

ХУДОЖНЬОЇ
ЛІТЕРАТУРИ
«ДНІПРО»
КИЇВ — 1968
Example: Russian, Ukrainian, or Belarusian?
Look for the unique letters.

Belarusian’s unique letter: Ў ў

Citation for this publication is provided on handout
Tip #5: Use transliteration to search for records in OCLC

**Resource:** [http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/roman.html](http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/roman.html)

When possible, use the **ALA-LC Romanization Tables** to transliterate key bibliographic data in OCLC.

Example:
Tvortsi i suvremennost


Note that Sofia (София) is the capital of Bulgaria. So it’s safe to guess that it’s in Bulgarian.

Citation for this publication is provided on handout.
Example: Search in OCLC using Transliterated Words

Search in database: WorldCat (Updated: 2016-04-08)
OCLC catalog of books and other materials in libraries worldwide

Search for:
- Title: Tvorski i suvremennost
- Keyword:
- Keyword:

Limit to:
- Language: Bulgarian
- Number of Libraries: All

Limit type to:
- Books
- Serial Publications
- Articles
- Visual Materials
- Sound Recordings
- Musical Scores
- Computer Files
- Archival Materials
- Maps
- Internet Resources
- Continually Updated Resources

Subtype limits:
- Any Audience
- Any Content
- Any Format

Limit availability to:
- Items in my library (AAA, Auburn University)

Rank by:
- Number of Libraries

Search | Clear
Example: Find Item in Results

1. **Tvortsi i suvremennost. Lit. kritika.**
   - **Author:** Dishev, Atanas.
   - **Publication:** Sofiia, Bulg. pisatel, 1970
   - **Document:** Bulgarian : Book
   - **Libraries Worldwide:** 15
   - [Auburn University](http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/20079108.html)
   - More Like This: Search for versions with same title and author | Advanced options...
   - See more details for locating this item

2. **Tvortsi i suvremennost Lit. kritika.**
   - **Author:** Dishev, Atanas.
   - **Publication:** Sofiia, Bulg. pisatel, 1970
   - **Document:** Bulgarian : Internet Resource
   - **Libraries Worldwide:** 2
   - More Like This: Search for versions with same title and author | Advanced options...
Be language specific with transliteration!

The same letter from an alphabet may be transliterated differently in individual languages.

Example:
The Cyrillic letter “Г” is transliterated as

- H in Ukrainian, Belarusian, & Rusyn
- G in Russian, Bulgarian, Kurdish, and in most all other languages that use the Cyrillic alphabet

Make sure you use the correct transliteration guide
Tip #6: For logographic writing, develop some skills using character dictionaries

Resources:

- Chinese, Japanese and Korean dictionaries often have instructions inside on how to use them to search for characters.

- Look for online videos that demonstrate these skills too. (Ex. YouTube).

- Use dictionaries to find a Romanized version of the words.
Example: Search Characters in Dictionary

Book Title: 三体

三 (sān)  three; third; 倍 three times; threefold; triple / ~幕喜剧 comedy in three acts / ~岁小孩 a child of three 2. (多数;多次) more than two; several; many

体 [体、体] (tǐ)  body; part of the body 2. (物理)

Romanized: san ti

Citation for this publication is provided on handout
Example: Search in OCLC using Transliterated Words
Example: Find Item in Results

1. **Jiao feng : dang dai Zhongguo san ci si xiang jie fang shi lu**
   - **Author:** Ma, Licheng.; Ling, Zhijun.
   - **Publication:** Beijing : Jin ri Zhongguo chu ban she, 1998
   - **Document:** Chinese  
   - **Libraries Worldwide:** 72
   - **More Like This:** Search for versions with same title and author | Advanced options...
   - See more details for locating this item

2. **Cong yu yan xue kan wen xue : Tang Song jin ti shi san lun**
   - **Author:** Cao, Fengfu, 1942-
   - **Publication:** Taibei Shi : Zhong yang yan jiu yuan yu yan xue yan jiu suo, 2004
   - **Document:** Chinese  
   - **Libraries Worldwide:** 70
   - **More Like This:** Search for versions with same title and author | Advanced options...
   - See more details for locating this item

3. **San ti**
   - **Author:** Liu, Cixin, author.
   - **Publication:** Chongqing : Chongqing chu ban she, 2014. ©2008
   - **Document:** Chinese  
   - **Libraries Worldwide:** 60
   - **More Like This:** Search for versions with same title and author | Advanced options...
   - See more details for locating this item

4. **Zhongguo wen hua shi san bai ti**
   - **Publication:** Shanghai : Shanghai gu ji chu ban she : Xin hua shu dian Shanghai fa xing suo fa xing, 1987
   - **Document:** Chinese  
   - **Libraries Worldwide:** 56
   - **More Like This:** Advanced options...
   - See more details for locating this item

5. **Rain dropping on the banana tree**
   - **Publication:** Cambridge, Mass. : Rounder, 1996, 1902
   - **Document:** Chinese : Sound Recording : Music : Folk music : Compact disc
   - **Libraries Worldwide:** 56

When provided, the option to see the non-Roman characters is helpful!
Example: Verify Words in the Language

三体 /
San ti /

刘慈欣, author.
Cixin Liu

2014, ©2008 Di 1 ban.
Chinese Book: Fiction ii, 302 pages; 21 cm.
Edition: 第1版.
ISBN: 9787536692930 7536692935

GET THIS ITEM

Availability: FirstSearch indicates your institution owns the item.
• Libraries worldwide that own item: 60 Auburn University
• Search the catalog at your library

External Resources:
• Find Full Text
• Find this item at Abebooks.com (Bookseller)
• Find this item at Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America (Bookseller)
• Cite This Item

FIND RELATED

More Like This: Search for versions with same title and author | Advanced options ...

Find Items About: San ti (1); Liu, Cixin, (1)

Title: 三体 /
San ti /

Author(s): 刘慈欣, author.
Liu, Cixin, author.
Tip #7: Use OCLC & other web information to review the item

- Look at the subject headings and item classification

- For the more frequent languages, make note of key literary terms as you encounter them.
  Examples from Russian:
  Собрание сочинений (Collected Compositions), Избранное (Favorites), Повести и рассказы (Novellas and short stories), etc.

- Search the web about the author(s) and the work

- **Make sure to share** the OCLC numbers of any potential records with the cataloger(s). They will appreciate it!
Study OCLC Record for Key Information

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Summary

• Know your specific needs and develop your skills accordingly.

• Learn the keys to identify language and locate information.

• Share what you learn with interested colleagues

Please take a handout which has the tips & resources presented here.

There is also an online guide related to this presentation with links to additional resources:
http://libguides.auburn.edu/Library_Alphabet_Soup

Thank you!