In a Teacher's Cyber-Lounge: The Emergence of H-A-SIA

By Steven A. Leibo & Frank C. Conlon

Introduction
Imagine yourself at a research desk or in front of a class of students confronted with an issue which you are unfamiliar with—one that local libraries or resources simply do not allow you to explore. Recognizing the dilemma, you walk toward your "cyberspace" Asian Studies teacher's lounge knowing that at any hour of the day or night you will be able to submit a question or concern to professional colleagues all over the world. People from graduating student bodies to the leading scholars in your field will see your question and comment, sometimes within minutes of the query. Well, that is precisely what has been going on for the last twenty months within H-A-SIA, an electronic international Asian Studies forum.

Background on the H-A-SIA Listserv
H-A-SIA, the H-NET list for Asian History (in fact, operating in a broader context of Asian Studies) was launched at the Annual Meeting of AHA on March 4th, 1994 by two volunteer editors, Frank C. Conlon, of the University of Washington, and Steven A. Leibo of the Sage Colleges and the State University of New York at Albany. Since that time, in the best American tradition of open access, the H-A-SIA listserv has been open exclusively to professionals and graduate students working in the field of Asian studies at the college or university level. H-A-SIA itself is a subunit of H-NET located at Michigan State University and is partially funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. H-NET also runs several other lists, all pertaining to aspects of the Humanities.

H-A-SIA activities
On any given day the list of H-A-SIA subjects can be quite eclectic. Recent "threads" (ongoing conversations) have included topics ranging from the nature of the Gay controversy, which led to conversations on the decision to use the A-Bomb in Hiroshima, to a discussion of the latest developments in nuclear weapons, while another clarified the terms Varna and Jati within the Hindu caste system. The discussion of these and others such as urban images in Asian films, China's relations with Tibet, women warriors in early China, Hong Kong during World War II — all have been made possible by scholars from around the world taking part in these online dialogues and insights. The point is that the volunteers who maintain these lists are typically active in their field is, that their participation from around the world is truly impressive. At this writing, we include members from Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Thailand, Taiwan, Spain, India to Argentina, and we particularly look forward to the time when Internet access will enable much wider distribution of the listserv.

The goals of H-A-SIA are quite ambitious. We see the list as a means to help professionals establish the professional Asian Studies as a truly international scholarly community. State, national, and chronological era specific lists exist now and we anticipate the creation of more lists in the future. H-A-SIA, however, will continue to serve as the principal clearing house of ideas, Asian Studies jobs, conference announcements, and issues of interest to the entire Asian Studies Community. Moreover, recognizing the fact that a very high percentage of our members are responsible for teaching about all of Asia, H-A-SIA provides an ideal venue for discussions of both broad, comparative issues and more specialized questions which have comparative implications.

Apart from the general list, there are several subtopics on which the list members (at this time) are concentrating. These include the rise of China, Japan, Taiwan, and Korea; China and Japan; and the economic and political development of China and its neighbors. These are issues which are currently of great concern to many of the scholars involved in research on China and Japan.

Subscribing Procedures
To subscribe to the H-A-SIA listserv, simply send an e-mail message to:

Listserv@msu.edu

Ignore the subject line, and then on the message line type:

sub h-a-sia Your First Name, Your Surname, Your Institution

[Note the comma appears ONLY between your First Name and your Institution]

For example, sub h-a-sia Jill Smith, Hancock College

When the message has been received by the H-A-SIA subscription manager, the potential member is sent a questionnaire concerning address, research, and teaching interests. A subscription may be opened only after that questionnaire is returned completed. Upon addition to the H-A-SIA listserv, you will receive a "welcome to H-A-SIA" letter which includes valuable information regarding mail options, posting of items, etc.

H-A-SIA is not a substitute for a reference librarian, an on-line catalog, or an educational mentor. Still, during our short history, we have been able to provide an exchange of queries, ideas, and information which has been of value to our scholars. By virtue of the list being edited and moderated, we hope to be able to continue and encourage creative and constructive conversations among professionals around the world.