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Muller CJK-English Dictionary

PUBLISHED BY EAST CO. LTD.
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As a teacher of Chinese, there is a lot to like and a lot to hope for in the Muller CJK-English Dictionary. As Professor Muller states in his introduction, the dictionary was originally intended for use in translating ancient Buddhist texts. The author's primary field is Japanese philosophy, and people in his field will find this dictionary particularly useful.

Several attributes of the program are laudable. Primary for me is the fact that characters are easily accessible using radicals, Chinese Pin Yin pronunciation, Japanese pronunciation, or Korean pronunciation. It is interesting and useful to see the various pronunciations, meanings, and combinations together. For scholars studying Literary Asian texts, this dictionary is a happy replacement to the Matthew's I would carry about with me when I was studying literary Chinese. The target audience for this dictionary will surely benefit from its clarity and ease of use. It can also easily be used to insert characters into texts written primarily in another language. This is another attribute that can make it useful to the classical scholar of Asian languages.

To expand its use to modern Chinese would require some augmentation. Its most serious omission is the lack of tones in the Chinese pronunciation. This makes its viability for modern Chinese learners very difficult. Native speakers, using this dictionary to find English or other languages, would be able to use the character section, but would have trouble with the pronunciation. Those studying Chinese would certainly need the tonal information to help them with their studies. Another problem I encountered was the use of simplified versus full-form characters. Some of the simplified forms are used and others are ignored. There doesn't seem to be any consistency in the use of these forms. This dictionary would be most useful for those using sources from Taiwan or those who are studying older texts, where simplified forms are not used.

I hope an expanded version of this dictionary, or one like it, will be available in the near future. If the program is expanded for the use of modern Chinese students, it also runs into the mire of discussion about which phonetic alphabet is to be used in the dictionary. Hopefully a new version will include the intuitive accessibility of this program along with more extensive and complete entries for use with modern Chinese.

The packaging and directions are written in English and Japanese, which targets its audience even more clearly. I'm sure this software more than fills the needs of Japanese speakers, in terms of character usage. It is a boon for scholars of Japanese and Korean and offers hope for the students of Chinese. ■

Elizabeth Downing

ELIZABETH DOWNING is currently teaching Chinese and English at Hunterdon Central High School in Flemington, New Jersey. She has a Masters' in Chinese from the University of Arizona and has studied in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Beijing.