

# THE GAZETTEER

Your source for the latest news  
and information related to the  
China Historical Christian Database

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## FEATURED STORY

# V2 Release & Updates New Digital Infrastructure

The second version of the China Historical Christian Database has been released. It includes significant technical updates as well as new data. Highlights of the latest release are summarized below.

### Technical Updates

- A data dashboard to explore the data in a more visual and interactive way
- API connection capabilities
- Custom URL addresses
- Citation generation

The data [dashboard](#) gives users a new way to visualize the overall dataset and generate graphics on things like gender, organizations, geographical areas, and institutions. It provides an alternative way



# V2 Release

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to explore and conceptualize the CHCD data. API connection capabilities mean that technically savvy researchers can contact us to receive credentials and connect directly to the database to run their own queries on our server. Custom URL addresses make every record in the database unique. These URLs are consistent, so data records and visualizations can be shared via a link. Finally, citations can be automatically generated for each data record and visualization in the database. This allows search results to be shared, repeated, and properly recorded in scholarly publications.

## *New Data Updates*

- Addition of a node type to record publications
- New data on Missions, Missionaries, and Mission Presses

On the data side, the schema was updated to include a node type for publications. This now allows users to track the works that were published by Christian entities in China, and find information, such as the author and date of publication. We also added new data on the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) and the Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit (SSpS) collected by colleagues at *Monumenta Serica*. Barbara Hoster and Dirk Kuhlman led this effort. New material was gleaned from Löwenthal's book *The Religious Periodical Press*, and a large stash of data on the Orthodox Church

in China was cleaned and will be publicly accessible by the end of the year.

## V 2.1 Summer Updates

This summer seven computer and data science interns tackled four major issues:

- Make the Chinese Search Engine Work. Previous searches were not effective. Now, results work with Roman letters or Chinese characters.
- Improve query results. Some queries on the data dashboard were generating inaccurate results. Students worked to identify the problematic queries and debug them. Progress was made, but the work is ongoing.
- Eliminate Duplicates. Because of variations in names and the many sources the CHCD draws on, some people and institutions appear in the database more than once. Students identified these duplicates first programmatically and then verified them manually. This project is ongoing.
- Explore a new back-end infrastructure. Students researched ways to make the backend database storage more robust and efficient. The goal is twofold: first, to minimize loading times on the website, and second to use a database infrastructure that is better documented and widely used in the technical community. Work on this project continues.

## New Project Manager



Greta Frei (née Rauch)

My name is Greta Frei (née Rauch) and I am a third year PhD student in the History Department. Before coming to BU, I earned a BS in Computer Science along with a supplemental major in Chinese from the University of Notre Dame. I first became interested in China during the 2008 Beijing Olympics when my aunt moved abroad as a journalist. I studied Chinese for a summer in Zhuhai, China and an academic year in Kaohsiung, Taiwan through the US State Department's National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y) program. I simultaneously pursued my interest in tech, spending ten years first as a competitor and now as a mentor in the FIRST Robotics program and studying computer science.

I decided to pivot from tech to the humanities after reading Su Xuelin's conversion story recounted in her 1927 novel *Heart of Thorns* 《棘心》 in my junior year of college. I became excited about how I could use my programming skills to explore the rich literary output of Chinese Christians in the early 20th century. I originally applied to BU in large part because of the CHCD, so it is a dream come true to be working on the database.

## Student Testimony



Shengyi (Phoebe) Huang

Shengyi (Phoebe) Huang, a junior at Boston University from Shanghai, China, is pursuing a double major in Religious Studies and Socio-cultural Anthropology. Her involvement with the CHCD began through a recommendation from friends familiar with her interest in religious history. Recognizing the project's alignment with her academic goals, she joined CHCD to deepen her understanding of religion, culture, and society from a historical perspective.

Her continued dedication to CHCD is fueled by the supportive and intellectually stimulating environment provided by her peers and mentors. Access to primary materials on Chinese Christianity before 1950 has been particularly valuable, enabling her to conduct in-depth historical and anthropological research. Through the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP), Shengyi completed a project titled "Attitudes Toward the Three-Self Manifesto: A Study of Protestant Christianity in China, 1930-1950."

Reflecting on her experience, Shengyi expresses gratitude for the academic support she has received, as well as the generosity of CHCD's donors. She believes that the CHCD, as a digital humanities project, has the potential to significantly impact various academic disciplines, including history, theology, religious studies, and international relations. She plans to pursue a graduate degree in religious studies.

# International Scholars



Dr. Zhifeng Zhong

Dr. Zhifeng Zhong is an Assistant Professor and a Research Fellow at the Institute for the Studies of Buddhism and Religious Theory at Renmin University in China. Dr. Zhong has spent 2023-24 as Visiting Researcher working on the CHCD.

The main topic of his project is tracing the nexus between Christianity and the CCP. He is using the archives of the YMCA, YWCA, the National Christian Council of China and World Student Christian Federation to research and reveal how the Ys' engagement in the labor movement and student movements in the Republican Era helped establish a political foundation between left wing Christianity and the CCP, which in turn shaped the dynamics of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement.



Jianguo Liu

Jianguo Liu 劉建國 is an Associate Professor at Henan University of Science and Technology, specializing in the study of Sino-Western cultural exchanges. He has been a Visiting Researcher since the fall of 2023, exploring the social network of the prominent Chinese Catholic convert Wang Zheng 王徵 (1571-1644). To date, he has compiled biographical information on nearly two hundred of Wang's connections, including relatives, Confucian peers, other Christian converts, and Jesuit missionaries.



*data*

## Article in *Data*

A detailed description of our dataset appeared in [Data](#), a “peer-reviewed, open access journal on data in science, with the aim of enhancing data transparency and reusability.” This article introduces our dataset to a wider audience of computer and data scientists, as well as statisticians, hopefully bringing a new set of users to the CHCD.