

The Korean Cultural Database of Korea University

Hung-gyu Kim

**Department of Korean Language and Literature,
Korea University, Korea**

0. To begin

The Institute of Korean Culture (IKC)¹ in Korea University has been pursuing to establish a large-scale database of Korean culture, since 1993.

The IKC established a corpus of 10 million words for the study of Korean language in 1995, and is still working on to extend the corpus beyond 50 million words. In 1996, The IKC published a CD-ROM anthology of modern Korean poetry, which contained 10,886 poems.

Among those various projects launched by the IKC, however, the most challenging one was to build up the Korean cultural database. During 1996-1997, the IKC took part in a consortium project to build a database named 'Public Database of Korean Traditional Culture' as an information provider. For the project, sponsored by Korea Tele-communication to improve Korean people's access to their own cultural heritage, the IKC compiled 22 megabytes of texts, 28,200 pictures, and lots of other multimedia materials. The IKC is now considering launching another project, which will utilize all of the electronic resources already developed, as well as newly being developed. The main concern of this project is to serve for academic needs in Korea and abroad. I believe ECAI can provide this project a productive stimulus as well as promising bridges to the world.

1. CD-ROM Anthology of Modern Korean Poetry

This CD-ROM Anthology of Modern Korean Poetry was compiled and produced under my responsibility, and with the participation of other professors,² it was completed in 1996 after

¹) The Institute of Korean Culture has been one of the largest Korean studies institutions affiliated to a university. In 1957 the Institute began as the Committee for Translation of Korean Classics in Korea University. Afterwards the Committee was reorganized into the Korean Cultural Research Center in 1963, and again, in 1997, into the Institute of Korean Culture which includes 6 research centers covering Korean language, literature, history, thought, folklore, and electronic media research.

²) Nam-hyon Cho (Korean literature, Seoul National University), Dong-ho Choi (Korean

2 years of extended work.

This project originally had begun in an attempt to produce a large-scale academic database, to aid research into modern Korean poetry. However, due to the financial difficulties, the project had to be changed to a CD-ROM project with the financial support by a publishing company, who would have the right to distribute the final output.

The outline of the anthology is as follows:

- Environment needed: Korean Windows 3.1, Korean Windows 95.
- Poets contained: 316 Korean poets from 1900 to 1980's. 20 to 90 poems per poet.
- Works compiled: 10,886.
- Other information: Commentary on 365 selected poems. Original recordings of 32 poems read by the writers. Other information on poets, literary terms.
- Search function: By poet's name, work title, form, key-word search. Full text search.

The results and methodology gained from the developmental process of this database is expected to be useful for other Korean literature projects, such as Korean classical poetry and folk song.³

2. CD-ROM publication of *Survey of Korean Folk Culture*

Survey of Korean Folk Culture was published in 1980 by the Korean Cultural Research Center of Korea University as the result of a large-scale research. Centered upon the Korean folk culture, this is a monumental achievement on the Korean traditional culture.

Over 100 scholars from various areas in Korean traditional culture participated in this series as authors. The series consists of 6 volumes, and in total 5000 pages.

For the past 2 years since 1997, the IKC have been working to develop this series into a CD-ROM. The technical aspects of this work have been undertaken by a software firm, Namo Interactive Inc., and at present (January 1999) the product is under-going the beta version test.

literature, Korea University), and Hae-chang Rim (Computer science, Korea University).

³) A short demonstration will be given, if possible.

The main titles of 6 volumes under which numerous illustrations, approximately 1000 photographs and texts consisting of 1,080,000 words in scale are distinguished as follows:

- Vol. 1 Social Structure, Rites and Ceremonies
- Vol. 2 Daily Life, Food, Clothing and Housing
- Vol. 3 Faith and Religion
- Vol. 4 Customs of Four Seasons and Folk Games
- Vol. 5 Folk Art, Business and Technology
- Vol. 6 Oral Tradition and others⁴

3. Public Database of Korean Traditional Culture

As mentioned earlier, this project was carried out between 1996-1997, as a part of a public database enterprise, supported financially by the Korea Tele-communication. The Korea Tele-communication demanded that there should be more than 3 organizations to share responsibilities in construction and management of the database.

The IKC took part in this project as an information provider for various materials, analysis, commentary, classifications and academic systematization. The work of obtaining permission for the use of materials, and writing of new information texts necessary for the database was also undertaken by the IKC.

This database was produced from over 360 books and various other sources. The final result was as follows:

Texts	22 Megabytes (including 0.8 MB in English)
Photographs	28,200
Video clips	52
Illustrations	1,400
Sound clips	190. Approximately 45 minutes long.

Those photographs, over 28,000, are especially valuable in serving as visual materials, to show the various aspects of Korean culture. They can also be utilized highly in the ECAI Project.

⁴) A short demonstration of the CD-ROM that is under-going the final test will be given, if possible.

The basic structure of this database was adopted from the *Survey of Korean Folk Culture*, with slight modifications. Thus, this database may be regarded as a multimedia extension of the *Survey of Korean Folk Culture*. Its total composition is as follows:

1. Introduction

2. Life, manners and mores
 - 1) Social life
 - (1) Status
 - (2) Family life
 - (3) Kinship
 - (4) Village life
 - (5) Economic life
 - 2) Daily life
 - (1) View of life
 - (2) Daily work
 - (3) Child education
 - (4) Social decorum
 - (5) The state examination, *kwago*
 - (6) Community activities
 - (7) Cultural education
 - (8) Adornment
 - 3) Manners and mores
 - (1) The 100th after birth, the first birthday, annual birthday
 - (2) *Hoegap*
 - (3) *Kwallye*
 - (4) Marriage
 - (5) Funeral and related observances
 - (6) Sacrificial rites

3. Clothing, food, housing & Business technology
 - 1) Clothing
 - (1) Dresses and costumes
 - (2) Personal ornaments
 - (3) Dressmaking
 - (4) Bedding
 - (5) Dyeing
 - (6) Weaving

2) Food

- (1) Korean diet
- (2) Special food for rites
- (3) Special food used in everyday life
- (4) Luxury items
- (5) Substitute food in time of famine
- (6) Court cuisine
- (7) Local cuisine
- (8) Kitchen utensils

3) Housing

- (1) Korean houses
- (2) Furniture

4) Business technology

- (1) Farming
- (2) Fishery
- (3) Hunting
- (4) Livestock raising
- (5) Conveyance

4. Faith

1) Folk life of faith

- (1) Belief in family Gods
- (2) Village beliefs
- (3) Korean shamanism

2) Other faiths

- (1) Geomancy
- (2) Fortune-telling and magic arts
- (3) The spirits
- (4) Goblins
- (5) Folk medicine

5. Customs of four seasons and folk games

1) Customs of four seasons

- (1) Spring
- (2) Summer
- (3) Autumn
- (4) Winter
- (5) The intercalary month

- 2) Folk games
 - (1) Children's games
 - (2) Adult games
 - (3) Sports
 - (4) Acrobatics

- 3) Hobby
 - (1) Stationary
 - (2) Games of chance

6. Folk art and technical art

- 1) Music
 - (1) Court music
 - (2) Classical music
 - (3) Folk music
- 2) The fine arts
 - (1) Landscape
 - (2) Genre picture
 - (3) Folk painting
 - (4) Buddhist painting
 - (5) Paintings and writings
 - (6) Molding
- 3) Performing art
 - (1) *Kut nori*
 - (2) Mask-dance drama
 - (3) Puppet play
 - (4) Korean classical opera
- 4) Dance
 - (1) Historical development
 - (2) Kinds of Korean dance
- 5) Technical art
 - (1) Wood craft
 - (2) Ceramics
 - (3) *Whagak*
 - (4) Mother of pearl lacquer ware
 - (5) Papermaking and craftsmanship related to works of paper
 - (6) Embroidery
 - (7) *Ch'ogo* handicraft
 - (8) Knot

7. Classical Literature and oral tradition

- 1) Literature
 - (1) Poetry
 - (2) Fiction
 - (3) Prose
- 2) Oral tradition
 - (1) Narratives
 - (2) Folk songs
 - (3) Children's song
 - (4) *P'ansori*
 - (5) Shaman song
 - (6) Folk Language

The ownership of the database is currently held by the Korea Tele-communication, in accordance with the original contract, and the database can be accessed through an Internet service of Hanmaek Computer corporation. However, the copyright of those materials included in the database remains with the original producers. The IKC holds the copyright of 20 to 30% of the original resources, and for the remaining, it is predicted that it would be possible to get permission again, on the grounds that the material is used for "production of database for public and academic purposes".

This database is currently accessible through the Internet,⁵ but it is not completely free of charge. Currently, a user must apply and register to become a regular user, and pay a set charge. Nevertheless, the speed for obtaining the information is not satisfactory, mainly because of the low performance of the communication lines and/or the server.

Another problem is that the information provider's reports for the revisions and supplements are not being implemented promptly. The reason for this is, unlike university organizations, who places utmost importance on accuracy of the information, commercial firm's priority is to raise the profits, and therefore the human resources are concentrated on new profit making projects rather than on revising past results. The recent Korean economic crisis has made it even more difficult for this problem to be resolved.

For these reasons, the IKC has felt that it is necessary to find a way, in which a trustable academic database could be offered in an effective communication environment.

⁵) <http://hmcom.co.kr>

4. Directions of the new database

Through experiences from the past few years, we have learnt as follows:

To successfully construct a large-scale cultural information database,

- 'Divide and rule' method should be applied, after establishing a clear prospect target. That is to advance by attentively building up those divided sections of work, which are realizable.
- Cooperation among non-profit organizations, such as research institutes having more strong sense of the public services, is required.

Recently, having lessons from the past, the IKC has been placing interest in the following areas:

- Digitization of the Korean classical texts, with the SGML encoding method.
- Preparation of page image database of Korean classical books and documents which are currently held abroad. We have already produced 34,576 pages of the scanned image. 13,010 pages of them are from the old Korean books in possession at the Institute of Eastern Studies in St. Petersburg, Russia, and are not found in Korea. Another 21,566 pages are from the Asami Collection at the East Asian Library, U. C., Berkeley.
- Investigation of the comprehensive bibliography of Korean classical books in Korea and abroad.
- Compiling bibliography of Korean literary works translated into foreign languages.