

# The 25th Anniversary of ASIALEX: Past, Present, Future

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This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Association for Asian Lexicography (ASIALEX). Over the past two-and-a-half decades, ASIALEX has grown and exerted a profound impact on the lexicography community in Asia and beyond. In the following, I give a brief overview of the formation, development, and prospects of our association.

## 1. Birth

ASIALEX was established in 1997 in Hong Kong, at the conference **Dictionaries in Asia: Research and Pedagogical Implications**, which was held at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology on March 27-29. The founders included Gregory James, R.R.K. Hartmann, Tom McArthur, and Amy Chi. Jianhua Huang, from Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, was elected as the first president of the association.

The aim of ASIALEX is “to foster scholarly and professional activities in the field of lexicography by facilitating the exchange of information and ideas through meetings, publications and other means” (cf. <https://asialex.org/#about>). Before its foundation, four sister lexicography associations were established, namely the Dictionary Society of North America (DSNA, 1975), the European Association for Lexicography (EURALEX, 1983), the Australasian Association for Lexicography (AUSTRALEX, 1990), and the African Association for Lexicography (AFRILEX, 1995). Compared with the diversity of languages and prosperity of dictionary-making in this region, metalexigraphic studies in Asia were relatively moderate. An association was therefore called for. Asia boasts a diversity of languages: of the world’s 7,151 known living languages, 2,314 can be found in Asia (cf. <https://ethnologue.com>). There is also a time-honoured tradition of lexicography in Asia. The first wordlists in China were compiled around 2,500 years ago, and Sanskrit lexicography can be dated back to c. 1,500 BC (Considine 2019).

## 2. Development

ASIALEX held its international conferences biennially until 2015. Since 2016, the conferences have been held annually. Over the past



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25 years ASIALEX conferences were hosted in 9 countries: China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Turkey, ranging from Eastern Asia and Southern Asia to Western Asia. Focusing on various themes, these conferences highlighted lexicography of Asian indigenous languages, bilingual lexicography, pedagogical lexicography, corpus lexicography, digital lexicography, dictionary use and education, language documentation, etc. In addition to participants from Asia, we are delighted to meet in each conference delegates from all over the world.

Besides international conferences and pre-conference workshops, ASIALEX has organized other events. Most recently, in December 2021, the First International Symposium on Cross-Cultural Lexicography was successfully held online by Sichuan International Studies University.

In 2014 another important event occurred: the inauguration of *Lexicography. Journal of ASIALEX*, the first academic journal devoted to lexicography in Asia. The journal was first published by Springer, and since 2021 it is published by Equinox. “Given this diversified yet also unique nature of Asian languages, it is extremely urgent and important to conduct more research to keep a record of and to preserve languages in this part of the world. Promoting the collection of words through fieldwork, the compilation of dictionaries or even small glossaries for indigenous languages, among other things, would be much needed to achieve this goal.” (Tono 2014: 2) Together with *International Journal of Lexicography*, *Lexikos*, *Dictionaries. Journal the Dictionary Society of North America*, and *Lexicographica*, our journal promotes research all over the world through publishing the latest lexicographic studies, sharing experience in dictionary making, and disseminating state-of-the-art knowledge of lexicography. In April 2020, the journal reached a milestone by being indexed in Scopus, and was ranked Class A (the top rank) by the Italian Ministry for Education and Scientific Research (ANVUR).

### 3. 25 years ahead

In the coming years it is expected that ASIALEX will hold conferences in a wider range of venues, attract more participants, and upgrade its journal. Currently, the venues of ASIALEX international conferences are mainly confined to Eastern Asian countries, which may partly be due to the prosperity of lexicography in this region. It is good to see that in recent years there has been a growing interest in lexicography in more countries, like Malaysia and Vietnam. In the post-pandemic days when the economy is gradually revitalizing, we

## ASIALEX international conferences

### 1997 Hong Kong

Dictionaries in Asia:  
Research and Pedagogical  
Implications

### ASIALEX 1999

#### Guangzhou, China

National Experience  
in Lexicography or  
Dictionary Compilation  
and Bilingual  
Lexicography

### ASIALEX 2001

#### Seoul, Korea

Asian Bilingualism and the  
Dictionary

### ASIALEX 2003

#### Tokyo, Japan

Dictionaries and Language  
Learning: How can  
Dictionaries Help Human  
and Machine Learning?

### ASIALEX 2005

#### Singapore

Words in Asian Cultural  
Context

### ASIALEX 2007

#### Chennai, India

Asian Lexicography:  
Retrospect and Prospect

### ASIALEX 2009

#### Bangkok, Thailand

Dictionary in Education

### ASIALEX 2011

#### Kyoto, Japan

Lexicography: Theoretical  
and Practical Perspectives

### ASIALEX 2013

#### Bali, Indonesia

Lexicography and  
Dictionaries in the  
Information Age

believe that more Asian countries will bid to host of an ASIALEX international conference.

We are also trying our best to attract more participants, particularly the younger generation of lexicographers and researchers. In the digital era, there is more room for fascinating research in lexicography, such as the building and application of digital lexicographic databases, semi-automatic dictionary making, and digital literacy in lexicography. Through conferences, workshops, symposiums, etc., we will encourage more young people to pursue this line of research.

Last but not least, we hope that *Lexicography. Journal of ASIALEX* will be indexed in SSCI and A&HCI in the near future. Instead of being many, there are very few journals devoted to lexicography. One more SSCI/A&HCI journal will certainly extend the influence of lexicography in academia.

### Journals

*Dictionaries: Journal of the Dictionary Society of North America.*  
<https://muse.jhu.edu/journal/540>

*International Journal of Lexicography.* <https://academic.oup.com/ijl>

*Lexicographica.* <https://degruyter.com/journal/key/lexi/html>

*Lexicography. Journal of ASIALEX.*  
<https://journal.equinoxpub.com/lexi>

*Lexikos.* <https://lexikos.journals.ac.za/pub>

### References

**Considine, J. (ed.) 2019.** *The Cambridge World History of Lexicography.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**Ethnologue:** Languages of the World. Accessed on August 9, 2022.  
<https://ethnologue.com>

**Tono, Y. 2014.** Lexicography in Asia: Its future and challenges.  
*Lexicography. Journal of ASIALEX* 1.1, 1-5.

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**ASIALEX 2015**  
**Hong Kong, China**  
Words, Corpora and  
Dictionaries: Innovations  
in Reference Science

**ASIALEX 2016**  
**Manila, the Philippines**  
Advancing Language  
Teaching with  
Lexicography and  
Corpus-Building

**ASIALEX 2017**  
**Guangzhou, China**  
Lexicography in Asia:  
Challenges, Innovations,  
and Prospects.

**ASIALEX 2018**  
**Krabi, Thailand**  
Lexicography in the  
Digital World

**ASIALEX 2019**  
**Istanbul, Turkey**  
Lexicography: Past,  
Present and Future

**ASIALEX 2021**  
**Online (host:**  
**Badanbahasa, Indonesia)**  
Lexicography and  
Language Documentation

**ASIALEX 2022**  
**Online (host: Guangxi**  
**Minzu University, China)**  
Asian Lexicography in the  
Digital Age: Challenges  
and Solutions