Journalist, war correspondent, artist, and book collector Frederick McCormick (1870–1951) witnessed extraordinary events during his lifetime. Born in 1870 in the Midwestern United States, as a young man he travelled across the U.S. several times, an early testament to his adventurous spirit. He worked for American magazines as an illustrator until 1900 when he accepted his first overseas journalism assignment; he was dispatched to China by *Harper’s Weekly* and the *London Graphic* where he reported on The Boxer Rebellion. Soon after, McCormick began a two decades-long relationship with the Associated Press reporting on newsworthy issues throughout Asia. McCormick was in Korea when Japan assumed control of the government; he reported on the mutinies at Seoul and later the dethronement of the Emperor Gojong in 1907. He was the only foreign correspondent to report from Russia’s side during the Russo-Japanese War, having spent nearly two years with the Russian Army in Manchuria. He reported on the revolution in China, 1911–12; and in 1917, back in Russia, he witnessed the Bolshevik uprising. His last trip to Asia for the Associated Press was in the mid-1920s; on his return to the United States for good, he worked in radio as a commentator on Pacific affairs. He also engaged with the Far East as a scholar and advocate; among the books he published are *The Tragedy of Russia in the Pacific* (1907) and *The Flowerly Republic* (1913).

What motivated Frederick McCormick to collect Korean books? One motive was likely preservation, as he was sensitive to the issue of conserving Asian cultural artifacts, exemplified in his important pamphlet, *China’s Monuments* (1912) that was published by the China Monuments Society. While we do not have first-hand evidence of McCormick’s motivations for book collecting, we know part of the story of how he acquired the Korean books in his collection.

In Korea McCormick befriended noted missionary and scholar of Korean studies, James Scarth Gale (1863–1937). There are three letters to McCormick from Gale that survive, located in the James S. Gale Papers at the University of Toronto. These three letters suggest strongly that Gale purchased rare books for McCormick. In 1913, for example, Gale wrote,

> Altogether I have in hand for you The History of Corea, called Tong-Gook T’ong-gam of which you have one volume; also the History of the Three Kingdoms, Sam Gook Sa a very difficult book to get hold of. I have already about one hundred and fifty yen’s worth in hand. The books of the company that have been printing Korean writings for the last three years I have spoken for and can have them at any time. They cost in all, that is up to the present number that they have printed about ￦ 150.00 so that makes some three hundred yen already accounted for. I shall send you later an account of them itemized.3

In a 1915 letter, Gale wrote, “I shall send you a report very shortly as to how I have passed these months and how I have used the funds.” Was Gale acting as McCormick’s book scout, and if so, for how long? The letters span 1913–1915, so the rest of the story is a mystery yet to be solved. Certainly, these letters demonstrate a particular business arrangement between the two men. It is interesting to note that several of the books in the McCormick Collection bear James Gale’s signature. Dr. Judith...
Magee Boltz surmised that McCormick acquired a part of Gale’s own personal book collection through Gale’s nephew and not directly from James Gale himself.5

Frederick McCormick had at least two personal connections to Claremont: Charles K. Edmunds and David Prescott Barrows. Edmunds (1876–1949), the fifth president of Pomona College, became acquainted with McCormick in China during the time that Edmunds was president of Canton Christian College (renamed Lingnan University) from 1907–1924.6 Barrows (1873–1954) graduated in the first class of Pomona College in 1894 and is counted among the most esteemed alumni of the College; he was a distinguished anthropologist, educator, and military man, and, by all accounts, a charismatic and engaging personality. Barrows and McCormick were long-time friends; in fact, in early 1951 McCormick visited Barrows in Berkeley, California, on his way to Montana where, sadly, he suffered a fatal car accident. McCormick’s untimely death spurred Barrows to reach out to McCormick’s widow, Adelaide Gillis McCormick, regarding the possibility of acquiring his Korean book collection for The Claremont Colleges.

Very early in the 20th century, The Claremont Colleges,7 located within the Los Angeles basin, recognized the significance and opportunities of the Pacific Rim. Pomona College offered courses on Asia at the undergraduate level as early as the 1910s; its Asian Studies Program, founded in 1936, is the oldest at any liberal arts college in the U.S. Claremont Graduate School8 introduced courses at the graduate level in the 1930s. By the early 1950s the Asian Studies curriculum at The Claremont Colleges was thriving, guided by the esteemed Pomona College professor Ch’en Shou-yi, and the colleges actively sought East Asian materials, such as Frederick McCormick’s collection, to add distinction to the study of Asia within the consortium.

Assuring the gift of the McCormick Collection involved collaboration between David Barrows, Professor Ch’en Shou-yi, and David Davies, director of the newly-built central library for The Claremont Colleges. Barrows facilitated the introductions, and Davies and Ch’en proceeded from there. Mrs. McCormick generously donated her husband’s Korean collection to Pomona College in 1952. Since then it has provided notable Asian primary sources within the Claremont Colleges Library, where students, faculty, and staff as well as scholars from around the world visit it to research early printing, Korean history and culture, and related subjects. The Frederick McCormick Korean Collection is a valued and most special collection at The Claremont Colleges.

2) Spelling, underlining, and punctuation are copied from the original letter.
3) James S. Gale Letter to Frederick McCormick. MS. 22 December 1913. James Scarth Gale Papers, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
6) Boltz, p. 28.
7) The Claremont Colleges consortium, established in 1924, is a unique organization in American higher education. The consortium comprises eight institutions: (in order of founding year) Pomona College (1887), Claremont University Center (1924), Claremont Graduate School (1925), Scripps College (1926), Claremont Men’s College (now, Claremont McKenna College) (1946); Harvey Mudd College (1955); Pitzer College (1963); and Keck Graduate Institute (1997).
8) In 2000, Claremont Graduate School became Claremont Graduate University, and Claremont University Center became Claremont University Consortium.