

Editor's Call to Action

This appeal calls upon users of the ABC Dictionary, and scholars generally in China and abroad, to participate in the broad effort needed to bring about (1) progress in Chinese lexicography, and (2) planned periodic upgrading of the present work.

In a way, the present effort is premature. It should have been preceded by generally accepted rules for pinyin orthography (e.g., capitalization and joining or separating syllables) and serial arrangement of characters. Instead there is virtual chaos in both these areas, best exemplified by the factious decisions of recent Chinese lexicographers to arrange characters under 186, 188, 189, 191, 225, 226, 242, and 250 radicals.

The advent of computers has increased the need to end this chaos and reach a degree of agreement more or less comparable to that achieved by Western lexicographers in their arrangement of entries and by authors and publishers in their acceptance of a common manual of style.

To be sure, Western practice is by no means completely uniform, and in any case took hundreds of years to evolve. The problems of Chinese written in pinyin are even more complex than those in a language like English, and are not susceptible to quick and easy solutions. Nevertheless, greater effort is possible, and is certainly needed, to work toward the eventual goal of standardization of pinyin orthography.

The present work represents a contribution to this effort. As a pioneering effort it has been forced to grapple with complicated problems that await solution. For example, should the popular category of four-syllable idioms called *chéngyǔ* be handled on the basis of their phonetic structure, which is overwhelmingly 2+2, or of their grammatical structure, which is a much more complicated matter since most *chéngyǔ* are of classical origin? Various reference works handle one such idiom as follows:

àn dù chén cāng	(five works)
àn dù Chéncāng	(Wu Jingrong)
àn-dù-chéncāng	(Lin Yutang, changed from Guoyeu Romatzyh to pinyin)
àndù-chéncāng	(<i>Hanyu Pinyin Cihui</i>)
àndùchéncāng	(<i>Yingyong Hanyu Cidian</i>)

We have chosen to follow the last approach (simply to write **àndùchéncāng** without spaces, hyphens, or capitalization), because we have become increasingly convinced that Pinyin orthography requires extensive joining of syllables in the simplest possible manner. We would, however, like to see debate and ultimate consensus in this matter. The same applies to our necessarily tentative handling of other problems, of which the following are a few examples:

Whether numbers and measures should be joined or separated:

sānběn shū vs. **sān běn shū**

Whether tonal changes should be indicated:

bǐjiǎo vs. **bǐjiǎo**

Whether preference should be given to colloquial or formal style:

bǐjiǎo/bǐjiǎo vs. **bǐjiào**

Whether components of resultative verbs should be joined or separated:

kànbujiàn vs. **kàn bu jiàn**

Of course the decisions regarding matters of pinyin orthography should ultimately be made by the Chinese themselves. I hope, however, that Westerners will add to the present effort to raise the issues, will participate in academic discussion of the problems, and will help find reasonable solutions aimed at increasing the efficiency of pinyin as an orthography and as the optimum method of handling characters on computers.

In these efforts it is especially necessary to give support to reform-minded Chinese who, unequivocally rejecting any idea of abandoning characters, insist on the need to modernize Chinese writing through a policy of "digraphia," that is, literacy both in characters and in pinyin.

Consideration of these issues will also help prepare the way for future revision of the *ABC Dictionary*. Apart from consideration of rules of orthography such as those noted above, there is need also for help in pointing out specific errors, suggesting terms to be added (preferably with citation to sources that can be checked), and contributing ideas for improvement.

We welcome corrections, comments, and suggestions. Please address these to

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