Artists began to flourish in China, following the country’s social and economic revolution. During the last two decades, many of these emerging artists became known beyond China’s borders and at the same time and for a variety of reasons, western interest in Chinese art increased. Consequently, modern Chinese artworks are being acquired by major museums, galleries, and private collectors; many colleges and universities now offer courses on twentieth-century Chinese art, and scholarship in this subject area is growing.

Because quality reference tools can support new and developing scholarship, Modern Chinese Artists is a significant publication. Michael Sullivan has corrected and expanded the information he collected for Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), in which he featured a biographical index of more than 800 artists. In this new publication, written just ten years later, Sullivan features 1,800 artists “who grew up, or were trained, in China ... even if they subsequently went abroad to work” and “...who attained some reputation in China in the twentieth century and opening years of the twenty-first” and whose artworks “are likely to appear in collections, exhibitions, and auctions abroad.” The entries are succinct, informative and thoughtful. Calligraphers are excluded unless they were also known as painters.

Each entry provides basic biographical information, including education; professional, social and political activities; artistic specialties and accomplishments; and a bibliography. Readers unfamiliar with modern Chinese art might wish for a more background information about art events (e.g., Beiping Art Convention) and societies (e.g., Bees Society) cited in the entries, while readers with an advanced knowledge of the subject might wish for additional information about the artists’ professional activities. More than seventy leading artists are pictured in photographs, painted portraits by other artists, and self-portraits. To avoid confusion in the entries and to provide clarity, Sullivan includes a helpful, introductory page, that lists principal art academies and the name changes they underwent during years of social and political upheaval.

Modern Chinese Artists is highly recommended for all art libraries with collections on Chinese art. I agree with Sullivan’s assertion that this work is certain to be a useful reference tool for “Western scholars and students of modern Chinese art, collectors, museums, libraries, dealers, and auction houses.”

Tang Li, Graduate Assistant, Art and Architecture Libraries, University of Maryland, College Park, litang@umd.edu