

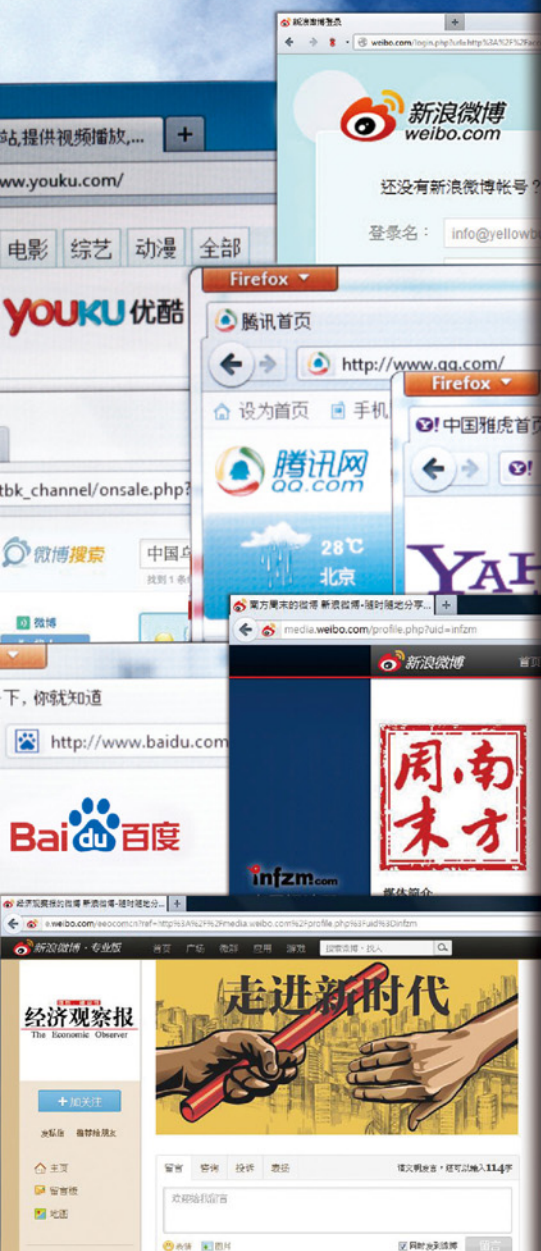


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ADVANCING CHINA

Reflections on media and politics on the Mainland



Language Across the Curriculum

Think the Gangnam-style



Spice up Your Life

Chemists inspired by Sichuan peppercorns over a hotpot dinner





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'My Hong Kong, My Taiwan' Writer and Culture Minister Lung Yingtai with New Perspectives on Culture and History



Professor Lung Yingtai shares her insights as Taiwan's Minister of Culture at Loke Yew Hall

Nine months after assuming her position as Taiwan's Minister of Culture, HKU was pleased to welcome Professor Lung Yingtai, Hung Leung Hau Ling Distinguished Fellow in Humanities, back to the University on December 1, 2012 for a talk entitled 'My Hong Kong, My Taiwan', co-organised by the Kwang Hwa Information and Culture Center.

Loke Yew Hall was bustling that Saturday evening, with numerous guests and students

arriving for the talk. The audience filled not only Loke Yew Hall, but also two adjacent classrooms, where there were live broadcasts of the event.

The talk commenced with opening remarks by Vice-Chancellor Professor Lap-Chee Tsui, who said: "I can still recall back in early spring last year when we were at the Robert Black College bidding farewell to Yingtai, she promised us that if she was going to hold a public lecture again in Hong Kong, it would definitely be at HKU.

Throughout her nine-year stay in Hong Kong, Yingtai was not just a visitor passing through, but had taken all the trivial things she noticed about this city and HKU to heart. We're delighted to have Yingtai here today again to share with us her new insights."

With reference to the recent centenary of HKU, Professor Lung first mentioned the founding of HKU and the story behind Loke Yew Hall. She then explained how, since assuming her position as Minister of Culture, she had been working with her team to allocate cultural resources effectively in Taiwan, and how her time in Hong Kong had influenced her. "Being in Hong Kong gave me a new perspective on Chinese history and culture. In some ways, Hong Kong and Taiwan have many shared similarities. As long as we embrace the uniqueness and freedom we have, we can make contributions in our own way," she noted.

"My wish is that in the future we can further make use of this soft power in dealing with conflicts and facilitate communications between the two places," she added.

Her remarks were then followed by a question and answer session moderated by Professor Cheng Kai-ming, with lots of participation from enthusiastic students. ■



The Vice-Chancellor presents Professor Lung with an HKU Tartan scarf and the new book on HKU's history by Dr Peter Cunich



Students eagerly participate in the question and answer session

Experiential Learning in Action General Education Week Brings a Range of Talent to Campus



Peter Moser (far left) is joined by students getting ready to perform his newly-written songs

In November last year, the General Education Unit recognised the importance of experiential learning by organising a week-long festival where students were given the chance to meet different artists in a series of cultural activities.

To kick off the General Education Week on November 12, 2012, the talented musician Peter Moser staged his spectacular '24 Hours in a Tower', locking himself in at the top of the Run Run Shaw Tower on the Centennial Campus to compose a song every hour, for 24 hours. Having a new song broadcasted live to the world every hour, Peter Moser amazed the audience with his music by performing stunning

pieces with various musical instruments. He was also joined by alumni of the Music Department, music groups and HKU students for live jamming sessions.

This was followed on November 13, 2012 by a dialogue with the renowned director Chen Kaige – the director of *Farewell my Concubine*, *Caught in the Web* and many more classics – in the Rayson Huang Theatre which was filled with hundreds of film-lovers. In 'Browsing for Happiness – Meeting Director Chen Kaige', Mr Chen discussed the implications of the film and the relationship between cyber culture and humanity.

After the world of music and movies, students were treated to an exciting contest between the Chio-Tian Folk Drum & Arts Troupe from Taiwan and local dance groups on November 15, 2012. 'Celestial Street Dance vs Local Dance Groups' organised by the Kwang Hwa Information and Culture Center and co-organised by General Education Unit, brought together outstanding dancers, in particular the Chio-Tian Folk Drum & Arts Troupe which the audience loved for their blend of street dance, percussion and electronic music. The extraordinary dance performances added an energetic blast to the cultural week.

The General Education Week was rounded up by a performance by Peter Yarrow, of the legendary folk trio 'Peter, Paul and Mary'. To his throngs of fans packing Sun Yat-sen Place, he sang his classic songs such as *Puff*, *the Magic Dragon* and *The Great Mandala*. Between songs, Mr Yarrow talked about how he thought the world was connected by a global language: music. He also explained why he founded 'Operation Respect' – to provide children a respectful and safe climate of learning for academic and social development and to protect each child from bullying, ridicule and violence. ■



The exceptional dance performance with elements of street dance, percussion and electronic music by Chio-Tian Folk Drum & Arts Troupe



Peter Yarrow advocates education and global harmony with his music



A full house greets famous director Mr Chen Kaige

Professor Paul Tam Elected Honorary Fellow of the American Surgical Association

Professor Paul Tam, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Research) and Chair of Paediatric Surgery, has been elected as an Honorary Fellow of the American Surgical Association (ASA), the oldest surgical association in the United States, with members consisting of the nation's most prominent surgeons as well as leading surgeons from around the globe.

Professor Tam's research interests include genomics and developmental biology, immunology and paediatric surgery. He was the President of Pacific Association of Pediatric Surgeons in 2008–2009 and is the recipient of numerous awards including the British

Association of Pediatric Surgery Prize (1984), and the International Outstanding Leadership Award in Endoscopy from the Ministry of Science and Technology of the People's Republic of China (2010).

The ASA's Honorary Fellowship is a mark of international recognition and awarded to outstanding non-US surgeons for their contributions in the field of surgery throughout the years. Professor Tam will be conferred the Honorary Fellowship at the 133rd ASA Annual Meeting in Indianapolis to be held in April, where the new Honorary Fellows will be introduced. ■



Renowned HKU Academic Achieves Further Recognition

Professor Anthony Yeh, Head and Professor of the Department of Urban Planning and Design, has received yet another international award. In recognition of his global leadership as a scholar and an educator, and his contributions in the advancement of humanistic globalisation, Professor Yeh was honoured with the 2012 Dr Gill-Chin Lim Global Award.

Professor Yeh is the Director of Centre of Urban Studies and Urban Planning, Director of the Geographical/Land Information System (GIS) Research Centre, an Academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Fellow of The World Academy of Sciences, for the advancement of science in developing countries (TWAS).

The Consortium on Development Studies was founded by Dr Gill-Chin Lim in 1982, and the Award first introduced in 2009, in memory of Dr Lim and in honour of his work. The recipient of the Award was selected by the Dr Gill-Chin Lim Global Award Committee, which comprises international scholars and experts from the US, Canada, Switzerland, Singapore, Korea, Egypt, and the World Bank. Professor Yeh was presented with the Award at the 53rd Annual Conference of Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning held in Cincinnati, US, in November 2012. ■



Preparing for Perfect Performances Every Time Acoustic Test Concerts Held before the Grand Hall's Official Opening



Close to a thousand students and alumni join Rebecca Pan for her musical journey in the Grand Hall

The Grand Hall in the Lee Shau Kee Lecture Centre, with its exceptional acoustics and 1,000-seat capacity, is one of the highlights of the Centennial Campus and an excellent

venue for academic lectures and cultural activities. But to ensure all future events in the Hall will be perfectly heard, the University organised a series of 'Preliminary Acoustic

Test Concerts' last December to identify and address any potential issues. Students and staff were given the opportunity to join professional acousticians in shaping the Hall's acoustics before its official opening.

The celebrated acts included *A Night at the Opera*, *The Snowman & The Bear* and the most sought-after 'Rebecca Pan and Friends'. Organised by the General Education Unit, this last concert brought together the legendary Chinese diva and young musicians for an inspiring dialogue cum mini concert. Not only did Ms Pan perform with a group of young artists, she also shared her musical journey with the audience and discussed the way she explored her hybrid identity and her mixture of music and cultures. ■

Get Campus Information wherever You Are with the New HKU Mobile App

On January 17, a free HKU Mobile App was launched, with both Android and iOS versions. The App was produced by HKU's Information Technology Services (ITS), in collaboration with the Centre of Development and Resources for Students, the Communications and Public Affairs Office, and the HKU Libraries. According to ITS, the mobile platform has a robust integration with the University's Central Authentication Services infrastructure for security.

The App lets users access a variety of campus information from their smartphones or tablet

devices, and is targeted at students, staff and visitors. It includes nine modules in the initial phase, namely News, Events, Maps, Libraries, Student Life, Food, Timetable, Emergency and Shuttle Bus, providing useful information ranging from student resources and upcoming activities to updates of catering outlets. The App is available for free download from Google Play and the iTunes App Store. ■



Showing Gratitude for Their Generosity HKU Holds Dedication Ceremonies on the Centennial Campus



Dr Lui Che-woo with law students and teachers in the new Lui Che Woo Law Library



(From left to right) Professor Lap-Chee Tsui, Mr Peter Cheng Kar-shing and Dr Henry Cheng Kar-shun of the Chow Tai Fook Charity Foundation, and Dean of Law Professor Johannes Chan.

Now that the four-year undergraduate curriculum has been implemented and the Centennial Campus is up and running, the University has held dedication ceremonies to thank those who have been instrumental in helping us bring our new buildings and facilities into being.

Dr Lui Che-woo has long been supportive of HKU in enhancing the quality of legal education, and the Law Library was named after him in 1997. In 2010, Dr Lui provided further support to the University to set up an expanded law library on the Centennial Campus. A dedication ceremony was held on October 30, 2012 to celebrate the new home of the law library. The new 1,500m² Lui Che Woo Law Library houses more than 120,000 volumes, is equipped with technologies for digital legal research, and will serve as a key

knowledge resource for law students and legal professionals alike.

On November 8, 2012 HKU held a dedication ceremony for the Cheng Yu Tung Tower, in recognition of Dr Cheng's generous support of campus development and the Faculty of Law. The new building is equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, a new and larger moot court, advocacy laboratories, an expanded law library, and an Alumni and Reading Room. Professor Johannes Chan, Dean of Law, noted at the ceremony: "To us, the new home is a commitment to the important and unique mission of the Faculty in maintaining and developing the rule of law in Hong Kong and the Chinese Mainland."

On January 6, a dedication ceremony for the Lee Shau Kee Lecture Centre was held, followed by

an Inaugural Concert featuring the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra. The support of Dr the Honourable Lee Shau-kee has resulted in the creation of the Centennial Campus' landmark Lee Shau Kee Lecture Centre, which includes 26 lecture halls and classrooms, a black box theatre and the aptly named Grand Hall, the largest auditorium on campus and a prime event venue for lectures, concerts and other activities.

On behalf of the University, Vice-Chancellor Professor Lap-Chee Tsui expressed his heartfelt gratitude to Dr Lui Che-woo, Dr Cheng Yu-tung and Dr the Honourable Lee Shau-kee for their generosity, saying: "These philanthropists and the University have always shared the same vision and mission in nurturing future leaders. Their benevolence will be legacies for future generations." ■



A dedication ceremony for the Lee Shau Kee Lecture Centre to honour Dr the Honourable Lee Shau-kee for his long-standing support of the University



At the ribbon-cutting ceremony inside the Grand Hall before the Inaugural Concert featuring the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra

Advancing China

HKU is uniquely advantaged when it comes to studying the rapid changes underway in China. Politically, because Hong Kong has a separate legal and political system, we can freely observe and reflect on events and development in China. Academically, because we embrace East-West perspectives, our academics are encouraged to apply insights from around the world to issues in China and vice versa. And on a personal level, because our academics have easy and frequent access to the Mainland and some of them come from there, they have first-hand knowledge of the latest developments.

These advantages are proving particularly fruitful in studying media, law and politics in China. In both areas, more and more voices are speaking up to call for change. Our scholars have been listening and their studies are helping China and the world to gain a deeper understanding of the ongoing evolution of this rising superpower.



Exposing the Censors

A programme developed by the Journalism and Media Studies Centre can detect entries that have been deleted by government censors on China's Sina Weibo microblog site.

The word 'tomato' may seem innocuous enough, but in March last year it began to proliferate on China's microblog service, Sina Weibo. The Chinese translation of the word contains two characters – for red and west – which had suddenly come to symbolise disgraced former Chongqing party leader Bo Xilai, who led a 'red' revival in his base in the west of the country. Microblog postings bearing this word were quickly deleted by Chinese censors. But not completely erased.

Dr Fu King-wa, Assistant Professor in the Journalism and Media Studies Centre (JMSC), had developed a programme that can detect deleted posts and track topics of discussion. He was able to show how the word came to life and then disappeared in China's microblog universe.

"What is happening in social media in China is unprecedented, it's very amazing," he

says. "There are a lot of dynamic and robust discussions happening on different, usually very hot social topics. Sometimes you can find these discussions on online forums but not to this scale of the microblog because people can circulate their posts to more than one million others in a short period of time."

Unique expertise

Dr Fu began to investigate the potential of this social medium almost immediately after Sina Weibo was launched in 2010. A case that year involving a drunk driver who hit two people and dismissed his culpability by announcing that his father was Li Gang, a senior public security official, provoked outrage on the site. Other cases followed suit and similarly became a touchstone for criticism and dissatisfaction with the government. The government response, at least in the online world, was to censor.

Dr Fu was uniquely positioned to monitor the extent of this censorship. He has an MPhil in Electrical Engineering, an MA in Social Sciences and a PhD from the JMSC. He also worked as a journalist at the *Hong Kong Economic Journal*.

With support from HKU's Seed Funding Programme for Basic Research, he combined his skills to develop a programme that detects patterns and finds relationships between people – information that is of interest not only in investigating censorship but also other kinds of research and commercial enterprise. He was able to identify more than 300,000 bloggers who each has more than 1,000 followers.

The 'disappearing' blogs

Using that base, he has mined their blogs at least once a day and found missing posts that were present in a previous visit but suddenly disappeared. Some may have been deleted by the bloggers themselves, but when censors deleted them a message appeared of 'permission denied', meaning the post still existed but followers could not get access.

"Bloggers can include everyone, even celebrities who may not talk about politics but may talk about social issues," he says.

Apart from Bo Xilai, Dr Fu has detected deletions on such topics as dissident Liu Xiaobo's Nobel Peace Prize and author Mo Yan's acceptance speech for the Nobel Literature Prize, negative comments on Mao Tse-tung, and a *New York*



Times report about former Premier Wen Jiabao's wealth.

Dr Fu has begun using the data to assess censorship and his paper titled 'Assessing Censorship on Microblogs in China: Discriminatory Keyword Analysis and Impact Evaluation of the "Real Name Registration" Policy' has been accepted for publication in the *IEEE Internet Computing* journal. But given the volume of data, there is a limit to what he can do.

"I can't make use of all the data myself. I want to make it available to the public and other researchers. The worldwide trend is for people to share data," he says.

That will require more resources to develop the site, which currently is available to a limited circle and does not have a search function. Dr Fu is looking for more resources to develop it further.

Looking for the bottom line

In the meantime, he is continuing to monitor the volatility of political censorship in China. Last spring, for instance, the government began to require people to register for Weibo services using their real identity. Dr Fu's programme then detected a big drop in postings by people who previously had written on sensitive issues critical of the government. After the new Party Congress ushered in a new leadership in

“It's a cat and mouse game – people are trying to find the bottom line for freedom of speech that the government can tolerate for the moment.”

Dr Fu King-wa

October, however, microblogs were alight again with discussions of corruption in government.

"The political environment in China keeps changing. I don't know what will happen after three months, but now we see signs that people have more space to comment on corruption cases in China than half a year ago. It's a cat

and mouse game – people are trying to find the bottom line for freedom of speech that the government can tolerate for the moment."

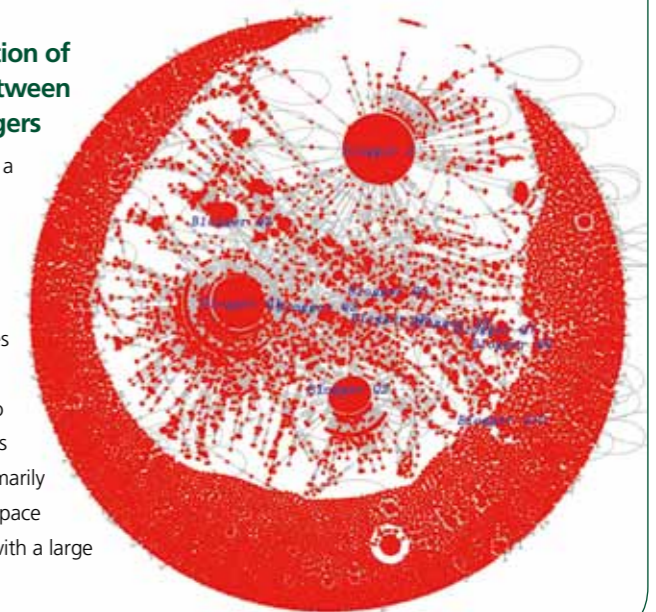
The detection programme Dr Fu developed is helping the rest of the world to understand this bottom line, too. ■



Dr Fu had developed a programme to detect deleted posts on Sina Weibo owing to the political censorship in China

Graphical visualisation of interconnection between Chinese microbloggers

Each red node represents a microblogger and its size is proportional to the number of followers of a microblogger. A grey arrow between two nodes signifies a retweet sent from one microblogger to another. This graph shows that the reposts were primarily diffused via the internet space by a few microbloggers with a large amount of followers.



Censorship of 'tomato' on Sina Weibo

A Room for Debate

The jailing of dissident Liu Xiaobo motivated the Faculty of Law to promote deeper discussion on China's constitutional development and reform.



At the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony held on December 10, 2010, Liu Xiaobo was absent but the Nobel Laureate was symbolically recognised by an empty chair. (Courtesy of Apple Daily)

When Liu Xiaobo was jailed for 11 years in 2009 for co-authoring *Charter 08*, a manifesto calling for the reform of China's constitution and the end of one-party rule, there was a global outcry. Liu ended up being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2010. Closer to home, the outcry was just as intense but there was only one place in Greater China that scholars, lawyers and others concerned could gather for frank discussion: Hong Kong.

The Faculty of Law quickly realised the city's position and organised a series of conferences and seminars that attracted people directly involved in the case, such as Liu's lawyers and other *Charter 08* signatories, as well

as academics from China, Hong Kong and abroad who were interested in the case in the context of China's historical political development. The result of their deliberations is a recent publication, *Liu Xiaobo, Charter 08 and the Challenges of Political Reform in China*, published by Hong Kong University Press.

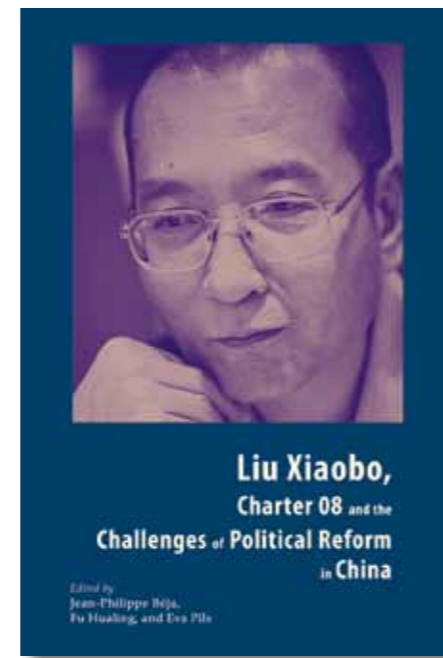
Professor Fu Hualing organised the gatherings and co-edited the book which includes a statement of Hong Kong's importance to the debate. "Hong Kong is the only place where Liu Xiaobo and *Charter 08* can be freely, extensively and seriously discussed on Chinese soil," it reads.

Bringing issues into the open

"These are academic events, this is an academic institution," Professor Fu says. "We're not doing political mobilisation but providing a forum where people can talk about their different ideas and bring the issues out into the open. The issues we are working towards are rule of law and democracy – whatever it means. We need to keep the debate alive."

Contributors write on both the specifics of Liu's case and its larger historical perspective. Professor Fu himself wrote about the development of the rule of law in China over the past 30 years and how Liu's case fits into that.

The rule of law and legal rights have strengthened as China's economy has opened, and vulnerable groups have subsequently used the law to pursue their rights and challenge the central government. The government has regarded this development with alarm and has struggled to contain these demands, leading it to harden its position and reduce the potential for consensus-building, he says. But at the same time the Communist Party itself is



Liu Xiaobo, Charter 08 and the Challenges of Political Reform in China published by Hong Kong University Press



not immune to changing demands and some members are leaning towards reform.

The prevailing situation explains both the harsh judgement on Liu and the important differences in his case as opposed to challenges to the government in the past, Professor Fu says.

Singling out

Whereas previously the authorities prosecuted everybody involved in a perceived challenge – tens of thousands of Falun Gong practitioners were detained, for example – in the case of *Charter 08* only one person was prosecuted, Liu. Liu was an easy target because he was co-ordinator of *Charter 08*, had been in and out of detention since 1989 and had overseas connections, which the Communist Party regards as suspicious.

"There would have been very serious repercussions if they had prosecuted all 300 people [involved in *Charter 08*]," Professor Fu says. "These people are different from previous cases, they have high-standing in society. They are working in the professions, in academia, they are retired government officials. It's much more a rebellion within the party system than an enemy force outside,

“Hong Kong is the only place where Liu Xiaobo and *Charter 08* can be freely, extensively and seriously discussed on Chinese soil.”

Professor Fu Hualing

so it makes it hard to prosecute those people without paying a high cost.”

Also, following Liu's jailing "the prosecution was so busy coping with international criticism, I don't think they had much time to deal with others in China, to harass them. Many of these people had a setback, maybe for a few months, but then they re-grouped and started again."

"The Party is evolving although it is still very authoritarian. When push comes to shove they will say, who cares, we have a regime to save."

Zigzag direction

Nonetheless, Professor Fu sees a system in transition. While the government enjoys increasing confidence in the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis, a consensus is also building that democracy would be a

good thing for China. The question is how to get there. *Charter 08* proposed peaceful incremental change towards greater civil society mobilisation – it was not a call to end the party state now, but to prepare for that end.

"China is moving forward but it's a zigzag," Professor Fu says. "It's similar to marriage. If you have no love any more, it's difficult to pretend for too long. In terms of the relationship between the state and society, you can't force people to say, yes, you have the power. If you want legitimacy you have to govern by consent. The people need to agree."

"We provide a forum for people to talk about these ideas and debate. Some are more critical [of Liu and *Charter 08*] so we bring the issues out, we keep them alive. I see myself as part of this process of contributing to that debate." ■



Demonstration in Hong Kong to call for the release of jailed Chinese dissident and Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiaobo (Courtesy of Apple Daily)

Breaking the Impasse

Politics is polarised in much of the West and at a crossroads in the East. Injecting Confucian values into modern political life could offer a way forward, says Professor Joseph Chan.

Consider two scenarios. In the US politicians have pushed the country to the fiscal cliff more than once in recent years because of an inability to reach a compromise. In China, the discrediting of Marxism has left the country without a strong philosophical compass and it is vacillating between Western liberalism and traditional values to fill the void. Where can they go?

Professor Joseph Chan, Head of Politics and Public Administration, has spent much of the past decade contemplating the state of the world and how to bring a new understanding to modern society. His framework has been Confucianism, which promotes different values from the West but which he says could combine well with modern concepts such as human rights, democracy and the separation of powers.

“I want to give Confucianism a modern twist so that this traditional system of thought can mesh with modern aspirations and values – so Confucianism can become a source of inspiration for modern people,” he says.

“My ultimate interest is the larger picture of modernity and tradition. Modernisation has been so powerful an engine that traditional schools of thought have been put to the sidelines. I think this is a worrying sign. The ancients captured great insight about human wisdom and human virtue. If we simply focus

on certain narrow individual moral Western values like freedom, equality and democracy, and base our society and politics completely on these pillars, we risk losing a great deal of these traditional insights.”

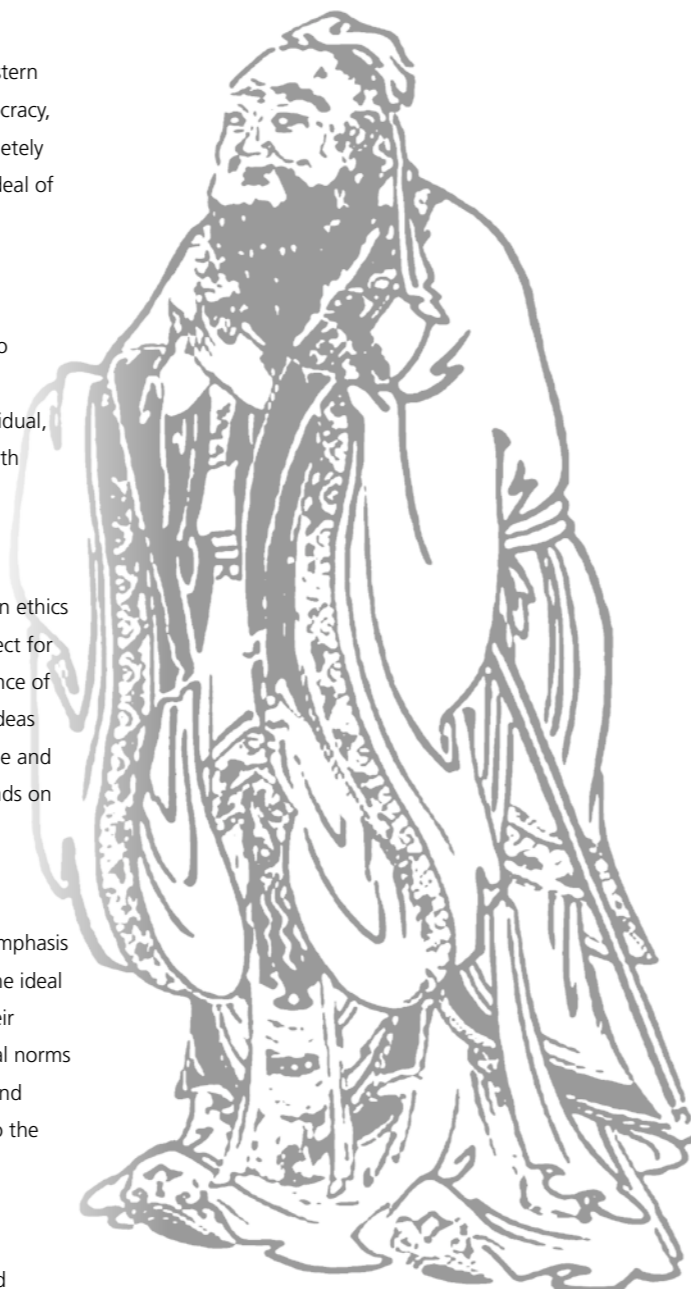
A place for human rights

Confucianism has particular potential to contribute to modern thought because although it does not focus on the individual, it contains ideas that are compatible with modern thought, he says.

“Confucianism has a great deal of very universal secular elements in its ideas on ethics and understanding of human life: respect for education and the elderly; the importance of family and of rituals; meritocracy; the ideas that the state should care for the people and that political authority ultimately depends on people’s voluntary acceptance.”

“Having said that, in the ideal scenario Confucianism would not place much emphasis on rights or human rights because in the ideal situation, people behave virtuously. Their behaviour is guided by rituals and moral norms which emphasise reciprocity and care and respect. There is no need to recourse to the assertion of rights.”

“Only when relationships break down completely and people reject rituals and



“For China my message is we can use Confucian resources to develop a modern political regime that is built upon institutional pillars like democracy, the separation of powers and human rights.”

Professor Joseph Chan



set aside virtues, would Confucianism have recourse to the instrument of rights.”

Fallback position

Human rights therefore are regarded more as a fallback apparatus – a concept seemingly at odds with the modern world where people have become quick to assert their rights. Confucianism instead starts with relationships.

Professor Chan cites the example of a mother who reads her daughter’s mail to find out more about her life. In the West, the daughter might immediately object that her mother had no right to read her mail. In Confucianism, she would start by telling her mother she could simply ask her if she wanted to know what was going on in her life. “It’s a gentle reminder rather than an assertion of rights,” he says.

Rights come into the picture if there is a serious relationship breakdown that threatens someone’s self-interest, such as a husband abusing his wife. Rights also have a special role to play in the relationship between the government and its citizens.

“In society writ large, state officials and the people are less intimately related, which is all the more reason to expect that sometimes relationships won’t run smoothly. There is also a strong imbalance of power between the parties. So I think Confucianism would be more ready to say it’s more important to have a robust system of political and civil rights to protect citizens. Hope for the better, prepare for the worst and build a foundation to protect citizens against state abuse.”

Confucianism in modern China

This message is particularly appropriate for China, which has been conflicted about Confucianism for much of the past century. For many years, especially during the Cultural Revolution, Confucianism was rejected as feudalistic and backwards. In recent years there has been a revival, with some of the revivalists thinking Confucianism in its traditional form is fine as it is and does not need updating. Professor Chan clearly disagrees.

“Confucianism can borrow some workable liberal concepts like human rights and

democracy to protect people’s interests when things do not fare well. It can also look at these things from a higher level and offer a completely new understanding of the roles and philosophical bases of these concepts,” he says.

“For China my message is we can use Confucian resources to develop a modern political regime that is built upon conceptual pillars like democracy, the separation of powers and human rights. Confucianism not only won’t reject the use of these concepts but also welcome them. It could also help these concepts to flourish.”

Professor Chan’s book *Confucian Political Perfectionism: A Reconstruction for Modern Times* will be published by Princeton University Press later this year. ■

A Different Kind of Watchdog

The Chinese media is typically thought to be under a tight leash of government control and censorship. But it can be a much feistier and more open animal – within certain limits.

China's economic reforms have been accompanied by the lesser-known development of a more open media. Commercial newspapers and even national state-controlled outlets have splashed on stories of corruption and helped to cast a light on social ills. But whereas in the West the media is regarded as an independent 'Fourth Estate', in China it acts with government sanction.

That sanction has been relatively favourable over the past two decades, but in the background there is always the fact that what the government gives it can take away.

Dr Li-Fung Cho in the Department of Sociology studies investigative journalism in China and



Dr Li-Fung Cho (Courtesy of Sun Jue)



“The relationship between the state and the media in China is multi-layered and things are never exactly as you would expect them to be.”

Dr Li-Fung Cho

says the central government began to loosen the reins on the media as economic reform and more power to local governments led to cases of corruption. Journalists are encouraged to expose wrongdoing, through the concept of supervision by public opinion (yulun jian du), and those working for commercial outlets in particular have pushed the boundaries to stay one step ahead of the censors.

“The relationship between the state and the media in China is multi-layered and things are never exactly as you would expect them to be. Censorship and control are not as monolithic as people might think,” she says.

Testing the boundaries: the Sichuan earthquake

The 2008 Sichuan earthquake is a case in point. Almost immediately uncensored news of the tragedy spread through the internet. Xinhua and CCTV – both government outlets – carried reports within 20 minutes and most unusually, appeared to do so without firm approval from the government propaganda department.

The focus of reportage quickly turned to the large number of students who died when their poorly-built schools collapsed. Both the commercial and national media carried stories, but the negative coverage was too much for



Screenshot of online coverage of a Southern Metropolis Daily report on school collapses in Dujiangyan, Sichuan, May 13, 2008. (Courtesy of China Media Project)

the propaganda department, which ordered the media to emphasise the more positive story of the government's response. This was initially ignored, particularly by the commercial media. However, after two weeks, they realised their time was up.

“You can only ignore propaganda directives for so long,” Dr Cho says. “Ultimately the government holds the power to demote editors and close down outlets. So the local media, under pressure from the Sichuan government, then started reporting that the earthquake was the reason why the schools collapsed and any further investigation would be carried out internally by the government.”

Collaboration within the media

That did not stop the discussion from continuing online. In fact, the traditional media and social media have a close, supportive relationship. Journalists use the social media to post information not allowed in their outlets, or to solicit information. They also use it as backup to let others know when they venture into dangerous territory.

Sometimes stories in social media are quickly followed up by newspapers or television. In Jiangxi, for instance, two sisters who wanted to fly to Beijing to petition the central government over the forced demolition of their homes had to hide in a toilet when the local police

came to intercept them. The sisters contacted a journalist, who alerted a friend at *Phoenix* magazine who in turn posted on the Chinese microblog, Sina Weibo. Within an hour 1,000 people had forwarded the post and the sisters were able to flee the scene. A senior official was subsequently removed from his position and others were investigated.

“These tag team reports show the strengths of the traditional and social media and how they can work together,” Dr Cho says.

Collaboration also occurs across county or provincial boundaries. Administrations can only keep tabs on reporters working for local media outlets, so sometimes journalists from one region will alert those in another to come and report on an issue of concern.

Speaking the truth to those in power

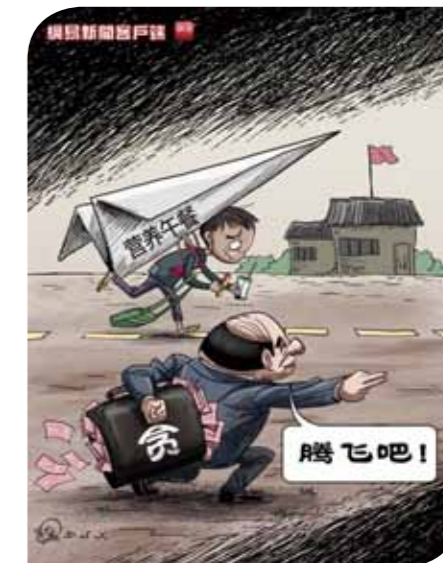
This brings up another feature of investigative journalism in China: that of the advocate. Some journalists have set up non-profit organisations to help those they report on, while others use their government contacts to help parties resolve disputes.

“Journalists have become part of the middle class and in some ways are part of the status quo, but they have a very different self-identity from journalists in the US, where objectivity is most important, at least in method,” says Dr Cho, who has worked in both places.

“They see their own role as representing the voice of the voiceless, providing education and even enlightenment. And there is the Confucian tradition that it's the responsibility of the intellectual to speak the truth to those in power. Investigative reporters have a combination of all these cultural aspects, with some influence from Western media training.”

One final point to consider. The government has started to recognise the soft power of the media in getting its position heard and establishing

credibility internationally. It recently invested in overseas media operations, aiming for a Chinese equivalent to CNN. Former HKU journalism lecturer and ABC journalist Jim Laurie is on staff. “These news organisations will be the face of China overseas,” Dr Cho says. ■



A growing number of artists in China use the medium of the cartoon to lampoon current affairs. This cartoon, posted by artist Da Shixiang to Sina Weibo, lashed out at widespread corruption in the administration of a national school lunch programme in which each child is only given a piece of bread and a box of milk for lunch. (Courtesy of China Media Project)



Dr Cho wrote a chapter titled 'The Emergence of China's Watchdog Reporting' in *Investigative Journalism in China* published by Hong Kong University Press



With the wide spread of technology, people in Mainland China can now easily get grapevine news from sources other than mainstream media using smartphones or tablets.

When Grapevine News Meets the State Media

People in Mainland China who learn about local corruption through gossip and rumours consider the problem to be much worse than those who get their news from the mainstream media. But government propaganda is proving effective at counteracting the effect.

Corruption is an undermining force in any society. It diminishes people's trust in their government and can even threaten the legitimacy of a regime. Yet surveys have found that while corruption is perceived as a major problem in such places as China, Mexico and Russia, relatively few people have direct experience of it. What, then, is influencing public opinion?

Dr Zhu Jiangnan, Assistant Professor of Politics and Public Administration, and her colleagues

have been studying the case in China, focusing on the 2002 Asian Barometer Survey I (ABS1) of more than 3,000 residents that found nearly 40 per cent thought corruption in local governments was serious but only about 20 per cent had personal experience of it. One of the reasons for the discrepancy was the source of information.

"In societies without a guaranteed free flow of information," says Dr Zhu, "people tend

to seek information from unofficial sources such as grapevine rumours and gossip. These sources often provide information that their regime does not want to be circulated but they also tend to exaggerate the reality of an issue."

"On the other hand, in China those who only get their information from formal sources such as newspapers tend to have a less severe perception of corruption. The coexistence of controlled mass media and grapevine news therefore generates some complex but fascinating dynamics in shaping people's perceptions of corruption."

Perception versus reality

Corruption in China can include economic crimes such as graft and bribery, official wrongdoing such as torture or shirking of duties, and individual behaviour by officials indicative of moral decay such as having a mistress.

Dr Zhu and her colleagues correlated media reports of such cases with the ABS1 survey and found that while perceptions of corruption were stronger among people who relied on grapevine news versus formal media outlets, in both cases these perceptions were not affected by the actual number of corruption cases reported in the media.

The results suggest a challenge for the Chinese government to overcome the power of the grapevine and it has risen to the task with some success. The liberalisation of the media over the past two decades has had the paradoxical effect of potentially dampening the grapevine effect.

While the media has helped to bring corruption to light – particularly local government corruption and issues of concern to the national government such as food safety – it has also framed the most serious cases to suit the Communist Party's ends. At the same time,



the fact media outlets are exposing problems has given them credibility among readers.

"However, when it comes to very serious issues, the press is still controlled. We rarely see reports about very high-level officials and when we do, they are about those who really failed in the power competition, such as disgraced former Chongqing party secretary and Politburo member Bo Xilai," she says. Reports of such cases must adhere to a standardised line developed by the government propaganda department.

A positive slant on corruption

"The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is very good at framing the reporting of corruption. It gives the impression that this is a personal problem of the official, that the Party doesn't have an institutional problem and that the case shows how sincere they are to tackle corruption."

"Corruption itself is negative but the government tries to frame it in a positive way. This explains why people who only get their information from the government media think corruption is not serious, or think it's less severe than people who only get it from grapevine news."

When people have access to both sources, the official accounts tend to blunt the effect of

“Tactical propaganda can help to prolong the Chinese Communist Party’s regime through selective reporting about corruption cases.”

Dr Zhu Jiangnan

grapevine news. "This finding shows tactical propaganda can help to prolong the CCP's regime through selective reporting about corruption cases."

An iron fist may backfire

Dr Zhu argues this approach may be more effective than iron-tight control of the media, such as seen in North Korea, because just one instance of corruption there could seriously undermine faith in the government. A separate study she did on happiness found people in environments perceived as less corrupt were made more unhappy by an instance of corruption than those living in environments seen as corrupt.

Overall, the research points to the benefits of a freer press, despite the downside of negative reporting that tends to happen in places like the United States. "In the long run [a freer press] can increase the resilience of these regimes. When people are better trained with democracy, they are also better able to tell what the reality is when they read about corruption or scandals – they can tell when it is not systematic."

Dr Zhu is hoping to extend the research to the internet and social media, which have a lot of similarities with grapevine news and which have come under tighter government control in recent years. ■



Xinhua News, the official press agency of the People's Republic of China, is one of the formal sources where people obtain information. If corruption or scandals are filtered, its readers have a less severe perception of the real situation in China.



Harnessing the 'Pep' in Sichuan Peppercorns

A hotpot dinner inspired a group of chemists to synthesise the chemical that causes that tingling sensation. Its potential uses are numerous.

"Look at the everyday things around you. Question what you see, hear, taste, smell – that is how discoveries are made," says Dr Patrick Toy, Associate Professor, Department of Chemistry in the Faculty of Science. It was this kind of thinking that led him and his team to find a way to synthesise hydroxyl alpha sanshool (HAS), a chemical found in Sichuan peppercorns (huajiao) – the chemical that causes your lips and tongue to tingle and go slightly numb. The discovery has potential applications in pharmaceutical and cosmetic fields.

The idea of experimenting with peppercorns was born when Dr Toy and his research group were enjoying a Sichuan hotpot dinner and began discussing the tingling sensation you get when eating the hot peppercorns in the dish. "It's not spicy, it's bitter and it has a numbing, tingling sensation," says Dr Toy. "As we enjoyed our hotpot we contemplated what caused that numbing sensation and how it could be usefully applied in research."

The next day, Dr Toy looked it up on that seemingly unlikely spot for scientific discovery – Wikipedia. He found that the compound which causes the numbness was discovered 20 years but it is only in the past four or five years that people have begun studying how it works in detail. In recent years, interest has risen because of the potential applications for HAS and it has suddenly become a hot area of research.

Efficient production

Dr Toy began working alongside Dr Bo Wu and Dr Kun Li and several research students on a way to synthesise HAS. "We found a means to make HAS that doesn't require a lot of fancy technology or equipment or skills. It can be made very efficiently in a way that is relatively simple, cheap and practical and it can be done on an industrial scale."

The synthesised HAS has attracted much attention – the results of this research were published recently in the journal *SYNLETT* as well as in the local press. Dr Toy has been in contact with a leading researcher at the University of



Dr Patrick Toy (left) and Dr Bo Wu enjoy an inspirational Sichuan hotpot dinner

"We found a means to make hydroxyl alpha sanshool that doesn't require a lot of fancy technology or equipment or skills... and it can be done on an industrial scale."

Dr Patrick Toy

California, Berkeley looking into the mechanism action of HAS, and they are discussing ideas regarding how to make and study analogues of HAS that might produce stronger effects that are longer lasting.

There is also a cosmetics company in Italy that may be interested. The company previously had started testing natural HAS as a means of reducing wrinkles. About 30 women were given a rather crude extract of Sichuan peppercorns to apply to their face and about half of them felt that it reduced their wrinkles.

"It does something to the nerves that is not yet fully understood," says Dr Toy, "but half the women in the study made the empirical observation that they felt there was a decrease in the wrinkles on their face." However, at the same time, a lot of the women didn't complete the study because the crude extract contained a mixture of compounds and it caused itchiness.

"It made us think that if you have a pure compound it may not cause the itchiness, so further experiments on its efficacy at reducing wrinkles can be carried out," says Dr Toy.

The problem until now is that isolating HAS from the natural source – the peppercorn – has been very difficult. In a dried peppercorn it represents about one per cent by weight. There are also many similarly structured compounds and isolating the correct one is a very laborious process requiring time, equipment and materials. For example, the people at Berkeley started out with 50 grams of peppercorns and ended up with 50 milligrams of HAS – or just one one-thousandth of material that was pure enough to study in biological tests.

"Even though the peppercorns are cheap," says Dr Toy, "it's impractical to extract HAS in its pure form, and without the pure form you get the bad side effects which may include itchiness and of course the bitter taste."

Pharmaceutical potential

"So, while extracting it from the natural source is desirable, it is not practical. That's what makes our method attractive. It has the potential for cosmetic usage and pharmaceutical usage."

There has been speculation that it may work on arthritis – if rubbed on joints. There is also the possibility of an anaesthetic pain-killer. For example, introducing it in candy form, so that patients could suck on one at the dentist, replacing the need for pain-killing injections.

Since Dr Toy's method of synthesising HAS is so simple, is it perhaps surprising no one has thought of it before?

"I think that is because too often we don't look at the simple things," says Dr Toy. "This is what I tell my students. What is obvious to you isn't necessarily obvious to everyone. And sometimes you just need a new viewpoint to make a discovery. In this case, people have been studying HAS for the past four or five years, but those people are biologists and neuro-scientists not chemists. It took chemists to work out how to find a viable alternative." ■



Dr Toy synthesised the HAS compound that is found naturally in Sichuan peppercorns

Tube Worms, Oysters and the Contingency of Seawater Chemistry

Ocean acidification drives a complex dance of survival for two marine species.



Baby oysters

Down on its rocky outcrop at Cape D'Aguilar, the Swire Institute of Marine Science (SWIMS) and the School of Biological Sciences continue its research on the effects of rising CO₂ levels on marine life. Two species currently receiving the close attention of Dr V Thiyagarajan (Rajan) and his team are held in rather different regard by human beings. One is the oyster, particularly the Hong Kong oyster, which is a benign and tasty creature. The other is the smaller and more obscure tube worm which Dr Rajan calls, quite simply, 'a troublemaker'.

The tube worm, *Hydroides elegans*, is a warm water biofouler operating in Hong Kong at the upper limit of its area and it is under threat. Dr Rajan's team recently published a paper in *PLOS ONE* entitled 'The CO₂-Driven Ocean Acidification Alters and Weakens Integrity of the Calcareous Tubes Produced by the Serpulid Tubeworm, *Hydroides elegans*'.

The 'troublemaker'

Shipowners, hoteliers and other institutions that use piped-in seawater as air conditioning cooler will be applauding that news. The tube worm attaches itself in dense clusters to ships' hulls, which causes drag, and to the insides of seawater pipes, blocking flow. As larvae, these fingernail length creatures cling to surfaces, draw calcium carbonate from the water and go through a process of biomineralisation, forming protective shells. No one knows quite what cues them to make these attachments, though they favour certain balanced water flows, which ships and pipes afford.

The paper's findings make it clear that the ocean acidification (OA) caused by increased carbon dioxide weakens the formation of tube worm shells. These are composed mostly of highly soluble calcium carbonate (CaCO₃), aragonite, with a smaller proportion of an even more soluble, amorphous precursor version of CaCO₃, ACC. Acidification provokes the formation of excessive ACC, changing the ratio to aragonite proper and fatally weakening the shell.

For Dr Rajan, the downside of the reduction or extinction of tube worms is an inevitable damage to biodiversity in the ocean. The tube worm



clusters are dense. They are similar in effect to coral reefs and the value of a coral reef, he says, is not in the coral itself but the community that lives within it. In a lesser but important way, the tube worms support a community of small sea animals and these will be lost with the worms.

Different in a bad way

Dr Rajan makes the important point that Hong Kong waters have probably the highest levels and fastest growth of carbon dioxide in the world. "The preliminary look suggests that our system is different to other coastal waters, but different in a bad way," he says. "We need huge research input into this field. That has to be established strongly." He says we need to identify how much of the change is due to the geography of Hong Kong, to Pearl River outflow and to human CO₂.

In an article in the December 2011 edition of *Bulletin*, Dr Rajan explained how the change of carbonate chemistry in local seawaters was also affecting oyster shell formation and threatening the death of a delicacy. "Since then, we have done a lot of work and garnered resources," he says. The Hong Kong Government and the

“The preliminary look suggests that our system is different to other coastal waters but different in a bad way.”

Dr V Thiyagarajan

University of Hong Kong have paid enormous attention to this issue and funded several projects worth over HK\$10 million to Dr Rajan and his international interdisciplinary research group, comprised mostly of PhD graduates.

'How many more Christmases for oysters?'

In December 2012, the Institute called together a meeting of 20 leading marine scientists from 12 countries and graduate students from Hong Kong universities to discuss the problem of OA and explore solutions. Titled 'Interdisciplinary Symposium on Ocean Acidification and Climate Change' (ISOACC), they issued a press release headed, 'How many more Christmases for oysters?' and made some significant points.

If the impact of high partial pressure of carbon dioxide (pCO₂) on our marine ecosystem goes unnoticed, we may start losing oyster species very soon. This will have severe economic and social consequences, not only in China and Hong Kong, but also globally because China currently produces over 80 per cent of the world's oysters.

Hong Kong has just banned bottom trawling and the government will try to boost aquaculture and maricultural activities to reemploy fishermen. As these strongly depend on our seawater chemistry

and pCO₂, we have to thoroughly and urgently understand the science behind the effect of high pCO₂.

We need to map the cause and effects of local chemistry changes and look into possible solutions including coastal zone management such as blue carbon. The ISOACC discussed several possible options, one of which is to identify an oyster population that can withstand high pCO₂ seawater and selectively breed them in aquaculture forms.

Dr Rajan explained that there are three regional oysters, the Japanese, the Xiamen and the Hong Kong. The most likely to survive was the more invasive Japanese oyster. The larger, fleshier Hong Kong oyster – a white oyster – could be gone entirely within a century. Not only would this be a shame for the local economy, it may mean the loss of the sea life community around the oyster which the Japanese oyster could alter.

Dr Rajan believes that awareness of the Hong Kong oyster, caught not so much at Lau Fau Shan but along the Chinese coast, should be raised locally. Most people in Hong Kong do not know about it or eat it. "Marketed effectively, a sustainable way of culturing the oyster could be found and more use made of it," says Dr Rajan. ■



From right: Professor David Dudgeon, Associate Dean of Faculty of Science, Professor Paul Tam, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Dr V Thiyagarajan and Professor Rudolf Wu, Director of School of Biological Sciences, made the opening toast at the 1st ISOACC.



The oyster larval culture (mini-experimental hatchery) facility for HKU students to study climate change effects on oysters



Trade and Inequality

Trade and opening up to China have fuelled Hong Kong's phenomenal economic success in recent decades, but they have also left greater inequality in their wake.

Hong Kong's open port and free trade economy have often been touted as the secrets to its economic success. Over most of the last decade, as trade with the world has become freer, the city has experienced strong economic growth and low unemployment. But there has been a downside to this: Hong Kong has one of the highest rates of inequality among highly-developed economies, according to the UN Human Development Report. Why is there this disparity?

An HKU report commissioned by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) offers some answers. It is part of a global series of reports that aims to improve understanding about the relationship between trade and unemployment around the world.

Dr James Vere, of the School of Economics and Finance, conducted the Hong Kong study and says the picture here has been complicated by more than just freer global trade. The opening up of China, which is also intertwined with trade issues, has had a significant impact on employment.

Job growth does not always mean improvement

As manufacturing jobs moved across the border in the 1980s and 1990s, there were fewer opportunities for lower-wage workers. These workers fell into low-level service jobs, such as estate management and cleaning, restaurant work, and retailing, that paid very poor salaries compared to what they had earned in manufacturing and confined them to serving Hong Kong residents rather than the export market.

In contrast, high earners, especially in growing export sectors such as financial services (in terms of GDP share) which were benefiting from China's opening, reaped huge benefits. Between 2004–10 they saw wages increase by 10 per cent. But those in sectors that were growing only in terms of employment saw wages fall two per cent. Cheap labour may have created employment but it did not improve the lot of these workers.

“The mere fact that a sector is adding jobs does not necessarily imply that workers in that sector are doing well.”

Dr James Vere

“The mere fact that a sector is adding jobs does not necessarily imply that workers in that sector are doing well,” Dr Vere says.

Little relief for low-skilled workers

Many of the displaced low-skilled workers have minimal education but a number of them are still in their 40s or 50s, meaning they have many years of economic activity ahead.

“Though free trade has been a boon for higher-skilled workers, who now enjoy greater demand for their services from the global market, it has been quite negative for lower-skilled workers who now compete with an overwhelming supply of labour from China. There is still a sizeable chunk of workers who don't even have secondary school education.”

“Given that there is no obvious source of potential demand for low-skilled workers, it seems unlikely that these circumstances will change in the near or medium term.”

Efforts to further open opportunities with China have not helped this group. The Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) signed with the Mainland in 2003 has created jobs equivalent to one per cent of Hong Kong's labour force, but not for those on the low end of the earnings ladder.

Minimum wage legislation introduced in 2010 is also not expected to be much help over the long term. Dr Vere has done extensive work on this issue separate from the ADB study and notes that it places a disproportionate burden on a relatively small number of employers, who may end up turning to less labour-intensive production methods in the future to save money.

China's own economic development could create further pressures in the future. The country is moving up the value chain and, while Hong Kong currently has an advantage in providing services, it cannot be assumed this situation will continue.



Best to be flexible

“The main trend Hong Kong has to be worried about is the increased competitiveness of China and trying to stay one step ahead to carve out a niche for ourselves. In terms of employment policy, there is not whole lot we can do. Government-directed changes in occupational structure tend not to work,” he says.

“The best we can do is to keep our economy flexible and be able to respond to changes. Generally, in terms of education, we need to make sure our graduates can do a lot of different things. And we want to make it as easy as possible for people to start up and wind up businesses.”

Free trade, though, remains an important and inescapable part of Hong Kong's development story, despite the ups and downs for workers.

“Hong Kong as a whole has been well-served by its liberal trade regime. Free trade is not negotiable,” Dr Vere says. “But if we want to look at the effect of trade on employment in Hong Kong, it's really a story of how Hong Kong has responded to the opening up of China. Our manufacturing jobs may have gone across the border but we have also been given opportunities to provide services there. It's a two-way street but there are consequences and we have to think about how to address them.” ■



The statutory minimum wage was implemented in Hong Kong in 2011 and has just been adjusted from its prevailing rate of HK\$28 to HK\$30 per hour; the revised rate will come into force on May 1, 2013.



Language Across the Curriculum – Think the Gangnam-style

The Faculty of Education develops a programme to help local schools cope with government's Medium of Instruction policy.

Two years ago, the Government implemented what it termed a 'fine-tuning' of its Medium of Instruction (MOI) policy, giving individual schools increased autonomy regarding decisions on the MOI adopted within each school. Many schools wanted to seize the opportunity to increase students' exposure to English Medium Instruction (EMI). However, it was not simply a question of switching languages – it soon became evident that while the 'fine-tuning' shift represented an opportunity to schools, it also represented a major challenge.

"The challenge is to switch MOI without undermining students' successful learning of

subjects," explains Professor Stephen Andrews, Dean of the Faculty of Education. "Since many students struggle with subjects like maths and science even in their first language, asking them to study those subjects in a second language, English – which they also may be finding difficult to learn – could have disastrous results."

The problem may be further exacerbated if teachers of those subjects have little or no experience of EMI teaching. "In short, it can result in the worst of both worlds," says Professor Andrews. "Despite increased exposure to English, students' English proficiency shows no improvement, while the teaching of the

content subject becomes impoverished, with teachers focusing on transmitting knowledge in the second language (spoon-feeding to try to ensure comprehension) rather than providing the intellectually rich and challenging learning experience that students might have enjoyed in the first language."

Whole-school approach

The Faculty of Education has been working on ways to help schools deal with the challenge and has developed a 'whole-school approach' to the problem with its Language Across the Curriculum (LAC) programme. Says Professor Angel Lin, Associate Professor and Associate Dean (Learning

"Persuading teachers is my number one job... I have to convince them of the need for professional development across the curriculum."

Professor Angel Lin

and Teaching) of the Faculty of Education, who worked with a team of colleagues in developing the programme, "LAC is about enhancing both academic language awareness and academic content awareness. Teachers need higher awareness of everyday English styles and academic English styles."

"This year people have been caught up with the Korean pop phenomenon Gangnam-style. It has helped me illustrate a point that when it comes to English, we have many styles – US-style, Australian-style, Hong Kong-style – and now with MOI fine-tuning we have academic style! This is what LAC is all about. Whether the medium is English, Chinese – any language that is used as the MOI – that medium must be transparent."

Students and teachers cannot automatically pick up the different styles: they need both proper exposure and explicit instruction on differences in academic styles and everyday speaking styles. But for this to happen, the whole school needs to be behind the initiative – it requires planning and leadership at school management level and commitment at teacher and student level.

Professional development

"Persuading teachers is my number one job,"

says Professor Lin. "Many feel they don't need any more training. I have to convince them of the need for professional development across the curriculum."

The Education Bureau is beginning to appreciate the need for a more organised approach too. Last November, they co-organised with the Faculty a symposium on the subject. There were 300 places, but 400 teachers signed up and so a screen was set up in an adjoining lecture room and Professor Lin's keynote speech broadcast there simultaneously.

"We have worked with over 50 Hong Kong schools on LAC already," says Professor Lin, "and some of them shared their experiences at the symposium. They are very enthusiastic but need more incentive – workshops are a start but they are not enough. The Faculty has therefore introduced a Master of Education in Language Across the Curriculum, initiated in 2012. It is the first of its kind in Hong Kong and across Southeast Asia."

In addition, the Faculty held a meeting in January with representatives from other universities and Chair of Education Professor Cheng Kai-ming to talk about how to provide incentives to teachers for professional development in EMI teaching.



It is not only in Hong Kong that the Medium of Instruction question is under scrutiny. Known as CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), it is a hot topic of research in Europe and Scandinavia – particularly Sweden, Spain and Germany. "All over Europe now they are trying to teach some subjects in English," says Professor Lin. In June, there is a conference on CLIL in Spain, to which she will be taking a group of her research students.

LAC is a prime example of teaching, research and knowledge exchange combined. The Faculty has already tried the programme overseas. Professor Lin and PhD student April Liu Yiqi spent four weeks at the end of 2012 at a bilingual school in Thailand. Bilingual education is becoming popular in Thailand, where increasing numbers of schools want to do some lessons in English. "April tried out our LAC approach on an EMI class which has both Thai teachers and English teachers. She taught them how to improve their English essay-writing techniques in the subject of social studies, and over just four weeks there was significant improvement," says Professor Lin. "The school is very pleased with the results." ■



Participants in the LAC course, along with course tutors Nicole Tavares and Dr Simon Chan who developed the materials alongside Professor Angel Lin.



PhD student April Liu Yiqi with her Grade 12 class in the bilingual school in Thailand



HKU confers Honorary Degrees upon three outstanding individuals

HKU's Honorary Graduates: All Outstanding in Their Own Way

In recognition of their exceptional contributions to society and the world, and their commitment to academia and the University, three outstanding individuals – Syed Kemal Shah Bokhary, Henry Cheng Kar-shun and Yao Ming – were conferred Honorary Degrees by HKU Chancellor Dr the Honourable Leung Chun-ying at the 187th Congregation on November 27, 2012 in Hong Kong. A delegation led by the Vice-Chancellor also travelled to Burma to confer an Honorary Degree on Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.



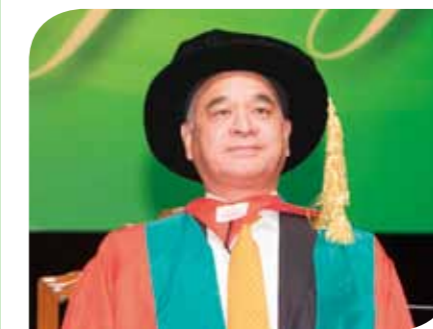
Henry Cheng Kar-shun *Doctor of Social Sciences honoris causa*

Dr Henry Cheng was presented for the degree of Doctor of Social Sciences *honoris causa* for outstanding charitable work and fostering ties between Hong Kong and the Mainland.

Dr Cheng is now the Chairman and Executive Director of New World Development Company and Chow Tai Fook Jewellery Group Limited. His wide business interests and pioneering developments in China have gone hand in hand with strenuous efforts to help develop education in the Mainland.

Notable examples of Dr Cheng's contributions are the establishment of the Better Hong Kong Foundation, the founding of the Cheng Yu Tung Management Institute, the establishment of the New World Mathematics Award and the Wu Zhi Qiao (Bridge to China) Charitable Foundation.

Dr Cheng has generously supported the development of the University's Centennial Campus and the Faculty of Law. The University's Cheng Yu Tung Tower is named after his family in recognition of their benefactions.



Syed Kemal Shah Bokhary *Doctor of Laws honoris causa*

The Hon Mr Justice Syed Kemal Shah Bokhary was presented for the degree of Doctor of Laws *honoris causa* in recognition of his contributions to the legal sector and Hong Kong.

Justice Bokhary was born and grew up in Hong Kong. He was appointed a Queen's Counsel in 1983, a High Court Judge in 1989, a Court of Appeal in 1993 and a Permanent Judge of the Court of Final Appeal in 1997.

He became known for his liberal views and their forthright expression. Through his judgments, he adopted forceful positions on important issues involving Hong Kong's legal autonomy, freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. Described as 'the conscience of the court', he retired as a Permanent Judge of the Court of Final Appeal in 2012 but was re-appointed as a Non-Permanent Judge.

Justice Bokhary has had a close relationship with the University as Patron of our Law Faculty's Advocacy and Mooting Society, as an honorary lecturer and recently Honorary Professor.

Joking with the gentle giant: A dialogue with Yao Ming

His enormous standing (both literally and figuratively) proved irresistible. Every seat in Loke Yew Hall was taken, and even nearby classrooms with live broadcasts were filled, as HKU staff and students flocked to see basketball legend Yao Ming on November 28 last year.

Though a commanding and dignified presence at the 187th Congregation just the day before, Mr Yao was here relaxed

and engaging, literally folding his enormous frame down to a more student-friendly size, and joking and bantering with his fans.

Basketball and sports were of course discussed, but Mr Yao also described his HIV/AIDS advocacy and answered questions about his Foundation's work with children in need and his interest in animal conservation. He also spoke about his studies and what it was like growing up in a family where both parents were also celebrated basketball players.



Yao Ming *Doctor of Social Sciences honoris causa*

For his contributions to sport and humanity, Yao Ming was presented for the degree of Doctor of Social Sciences *honoris causa*. Born in 1980 in Shanghai, of parents who were both famous basketball players, he joined the Shanghai Sharks at age 17.

He played for China at three Olympic Games, leading the Chinese national team into the quarterfinals at the 2004 Athens and 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Mr Yao has made outstanding contributions in HIV/AIDS advocacy and has helped fight the social and cultural stigma associated with HIV/AIDS with his participation in the prevention and treatment of the disease. In 2008, Mr Yao was presented with the Award for Outstanding Contributions to the AIDS Response by UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS.

In 2008, he established the Yao Ming Foundation, which helps the lives of children in China and the USA.



Close to 1,000 HKU staff and students gathered at Loke Yew Hall for a dialogue with Yao Ming

Going the extra mile: An HKU delegation meets Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma

In March 2012, at a time when Nobel Peace Laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was still unable to travel outside her country, the University nevertheless chose to confer a Doctor of Laws *honoris causa* upon her in absentia, in recognition of her commitment to non-violent struggle for democracy and human rights. So when an HKU delegation was scheduling a November 2012 trip to Burma to foster academic ties, it seemed the perfect opportunity to present the degree to her in person.

The delegation was led by Vice-Chancellor Professor Lap-Chee Tsui and included Professor Ian Holliday, Burma expert and Professor in Politics and Public Administration; Professor John Spinks, Director of Undergraduate Admissions and International Student Exchange; HKU Librarian Mr Peter Sidorko and Director of Communications Ms Katherine Ma.

At the ceremony in Daw Suu's home in the newly built capital, Nay Pyi Taw, she was also appointed Honorary Professor in the HKU Faculty of Social Sciences, and the first Honorary Advisor of the HKU SERVICE 100 global service-learning programme.

Daw Suu said it was a great pleasure for her to accept the Honorary Degree. She hoped her ties with HKU would remain strong and that relations between Burma and Hong Kong and

the Mainland would grow closer. "This is an acknowledgement not of me personally, but of what we have been trying to achieve in Burma," she noted.

In her new capacities as an HKU Honorary Professor and Advisor, Daw Suu hopes to use the example of HKU to empower young people in her own country. She said that the military authorities there believed that undergraduates getting together made trouble. "Of course they make trouble, but it's the right kind of trouble. And we have to teach them how to make trouble in the right way again."

Professor Ian Holliday, presenting the Honorary Professorship to Daw Suu, hoped she would share her knowledge about human rights advocacy with HKU students and community members.

He said: "We can't think of a better person from within our Asian region, our Asian neighbourhood, to really embody the philosophy of global citizenship to which we are committed."

Daw Suu said she would like to come to Hong Kong as soon as possible to meet students but could not say exactly when. She likes meeting young people, she said, adding that they have always given her hope.



Vice-Chancellor Professor Lap-Chee Tsui (right) and Professor Ian Holliday officiate the conferral ceremony inside Daw Suu's home, 'Rose Cottage'.

Honorary University Fellowships Presentation: Celebrating the spirit of community



Back row from left: Mr Joseph Wong Chong-chun, Dr Joseph Ting Sun-pao, Mr Simon Suen Siu-man, Mr Philip Lam Bing-lun, Ms Belinda Hung Kwai-yi, Dr York Chow Yat-ngok and Mr Chan Koon-chung. Front row from left: Dr Nicolas Yeung Shu-yan, Vice-Chancellor Professor Lap-Chee Tsui, Pro-Chancellor Dr David Li Kwok-po, Council Chairman Dr Leong Che-hung and Mr Chong Chan-yau.

The Presentation Ceremony on October 4, 2012 saw an unusually sombre start, as the Vice-Chancellor reminded the audience that the University had lost 'two of its own' in the Lamma IV ferry accident just a few days earlier. After observing a moment's silence, the Vice-Chancellor noted that honouring the memory of those lost also involved celebrating their lives, their achievements and the way they touched others.

This was, in effect, the point of the Honorary University Fellowships and those in attendance were there to celebrate the lives of nine distinguished individuals and their contributions to the community and the University. The Fellowships were created in 1995 as a means for the University community to thank and salute the lives of those who have made important contributions

in their own unique ways to the University, to academia, and to Hong Kong.

The HKU Pro-Chancellor Dr the Honourable David Li Kwok-po presided at the Ceremony at which Fellowships were presented to Mr Chan Koon-chung, acclaimed writer and film producer; Mr Chong Chan-yau, community service leader and advocate for the underprivileged; Dr York Chow Yat-ngok, former Secretary for Health; Ms Belinda Hung Kwai-yi, social worker, philanthropist and education advocate; Mr Philip Lam Bing-lun, former HKU Director of Finance; Mr Simon Suen Siu-man, industry leader and advocate of Chinese art and culture; Dr Joseph Ting Sun-pao, Hong Kong and Pearl River Delta historian; Mr Joseph Wong Chong-chun, industry leader and education advocate; Dr Nicolas Yeung Shu-yan, renowned

engineer, education advocate and community service leader.

At the ceremony, Vice-Chancellor Professor Lap-Chee Tsui extended his gratitude on behalf of the University community to the fellows for their contributions to the University and society.

"This evening we will be honouring nine individuals who have shown, in thought, and word, and deed, how deeply they appreciate the value of education, and how important the welfare of society is to them," he said.

"They themselves lead by example," he said. "Their significant contributions are made selflessly and we are glad to have this opportunity to express our gratitude." ■



Students are given the chance to taste Korean food at the Korean Studies Lecture Series

New Majors Expand Arts' Reach

HKU's Faculty of Arts is introducing three new major programmes within a year, a mark of its efforts to expand and address the need for cross-disciplinary subjects in arts industries.

The Faculty of Arts in extending its curriculum with three new majors within 12 months. The three are Korean Studies, Hong Kong Studies and Global Creative Industries (GCI). The philosophy behind the first two, according to Head of the School of Modern Languages and Cultures Dr Kendall Johnson, is primarily an expansion of Asian Studies in general to increase coverage of the whole region and to enable students to focus across countries.

"Korean Studies fits well with Japanese Studies and our focus on China," he says, "while Hong Kong Studies – which

will begin this September when the new Programme Director arrives – is in many ways overdue. Hong Kong is such a unique and fascinating place, both historically and in our contemporary moment. A Major dedicated to the history and creativity of this place is important."

Professor Louise Edwards was the main architect of the new Major, which will grow and develop with the arrival of its new Director, Professor Stephen Chu. The course will focus on the political, historical, creative aspects of Hong Kong, as well as its language.

"Hong Kong is very conscious of language, whether that language is Cantonese, English or Putonghua," says Dr Johnson. "It is important to the way we think about the city's history, as a former colony and now again as part of China, and to its creative capacity both in literature and film."

The other two new majors are up and running and it is Global Creative Industries which is attracting a lot of attention, as well as large numbers.

Creativity as business

Describing the course as a new and innovative approach to cultural production, Dr Johnson says: "It looks at cultural creativity not only as an artistic endeavour, but also as a business. It's the commercial side of producing art, including how you market, copyright, distribute and advertise creative products."

"The course is aimed at artists and creatives of various kinds – music, fashion designers, film-makers, writers, etc. It teaches them how to think at various levels about artistic creativity and to place it in the market."

Associate Professor Dr Dixon Wong, who has been Head of the School of Modern Languages and Cultures for the past five years, spent two years developing the course. "The Arts Faculty has always fostered creative talent," he says. "Now we want to help students convert those artistic talents into commercially viable opportunities, to bridge the knowledge between creative output and industry."

Dr Wong has a business background, having been an investment banker before converting to academia, and is a specialist in the rise of Asia's creative economy. He explains that GCI takes an overview of the various creative industries and delves into the mechanics of business operations, developing business models and the rise of Asian creative economy.

"We are not trying to be a business school," Dr Wong emphasises, "but the Faculty can train



Professor Louise Edwards (second on the left) and Dr Kendall Johnson (third on the right) attending the 'Loy Krathong' Thai Lantern Festival

“We want to help students convert artistic talents into commercially viable opportunities, to bridge the knowledge between creative output and industry.”

Dr Dixon Wong

students to nurture their creativity then turn it into something valuable. They will also find it easier to make the transition to working in industry after graduation."

While developing the content, Dr Wong did extensive research into similar courses run in the US, the UK and Australia, then extended those

ideas to take in Hong Kong's unique commercial position within the context of China and of Asia.

Comparative approach

"I also took a global comparative approach – that is, comparing the situation in Hong Kong with that in Europe, the US – and also within the context of the Asian region – China, Japan,

Korea and so on. We are facilitating taking this comparative learning further – all students are strongly encouraged to do an overseas internship as part of the programme."

Dr Wong thinks the course will appeal not only to creative people, but also to non-creatives who feel they have a flair for business but would like to use those skills in a creative industry. "The main qualities we are looking for in people who enroll for this Major – creative or not – is the ability to think critically. We want students to be critical of the current business set-up, we want to introduce a humanities element into business model."

Another important element is the issue of intellectual property (IP) and the protocols in different parts of the world. Says Dr Johnson: "With the internet, the rapidity with which new creations – whether it is songs, ideas, music – get picked up today is astounding. Artists need to know how to protect their product."

While IP is covered in the current GCI programme, Dr Wong wants to strengthen this aspect and is going to discuss with the Faculty of Law and Faculty of Business and Economics about developing a specific IP element to the course.

"We also want to expand to offer specialisation in individual industries – for example, advertising, film and media, and fashion and luxury," he says. ■



Students engaging actively in the CNN US Election Debate



Teaching staff organising the Korean Studies Lecture Series: (from left to right) Ms Kangsoon Lee, Dr Su Yun-kim and Lee Ms Kyoung-ju.



Texts, Tech and Changing Times

From treasured collections to IT innovations, the University Librarian discusses knowledge and libraries as evolving concepts.



An Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China by Sir George Staunton (1737-1801) 1798, 2nd edition, corrected and extra-illustrated, in five volumes.



Essays on Self-discipline by Zhao Shanliao, Song dynasty.

Peter Sidorko is a thoroughly modern librarian who demonstrates a keen interest in antiquity. His enthusiasm for the 'Celebrating the Centenary: Gems of The University of Hong Kong Libraries' exhibition, which ran from November 29, 2012 to February 17, 2013 in the University Museum and Art Gallery, is contagious.

Within the exhibition were rare Chinese materials ranging from a mid-13th century Song dynasty imprint to 19th century examination essays. From Hong Kong there were early government publications, textbooks and newspapers and on display were the Library's oldest western book *Dell'istoria della China* (1588) and Sir George Staunton's five-volume, second edition account of Lord Macartney's 1793 diplomatic mission, sent by George III, to

the Emperor of China. This includes a splendid and very rare colour image of the Emperor Qianlong.

The University Librarian poses a rhetorical question. With ubiquitous access to digital information and a rapidly growing preference for that medium, is there a place for items such as these in an academic library in 2012? "I give you five reasons why the answer is a resounding 'yes'", says Mr Sidorko.

"Value is an immediate and shallow response but their capital value cannot be denied and a library would not sell its crown jewels. They give us identity because, as academic libraries make bulk purchases of digital resources, the uniqueness of our collection defines us.

A rare book collection is also a symbol of a university and its library's maturity. First and foremost however, it is about scholarship and as a leading academic library we have a duty to share with the world our collections, especially these rare items, through our digitisation projects."

"Lastly, let us not forget wonderment. If you are handling a rare item, you are filled with a sense of wonderment. Whose hands held these volumes? Whose eyes gazed upon them?"

Contemporary library development

Mr Sidorko is in the vanguard of contemporary library development and the integration of information technology into library science. He read mathematics at Newcastle University and was about to embark on a teaching career when he realised that being a librarian would have more substance for him than teaching. "I thought I could bring my mathematical skills to cataloguing" he recalls, only half jokingly. "I was never, to use a cliché, much of a great book-lover. Simply loving books is not quite enough for librarianship these days."

Librarianship has become integrated with information technology. Two professional disciplines have had to come together. "There still can be cultural difficulties associated with this," observes Mr Sidorko. "These are institutional cultures rather than the professional ones. They get embedded and can be a bit difficult to overcome."

He considers himself lucky to have had a fast start in this at Australia's Newcastle University where he was Programme Manager of Client Services in the Information and Education Services Division. "I was really lucky because we were a groundbreaking department incorporating library, IT and other information areas. Parts of the library and IT were under my jurisdiction. The IT began as a mystery to me and turned into a steep learning curve. It gave me a great respect for the power of technology and its relationship to information – which is a large part of what a modern library is all about."

Active learning

Mr Sidorko's vision of an academic library as

“The power of technology and its relationship to information is a large part of what a modern library is all about.”

Peter Sidorko

a place of learning is evident on the Library's Level 3. It is an environment conducive to 'active learning', a welcoming place which offers a variety of learning spaces and suggests a merger of lounge, open-plan office and coffee shop.

"People learn differently at different times and need different spaces", he says. "We realised we had to develop zones, each with a different ambience." Some of these are for group study. "In our biennial survey of users, one of our biggest problems was students wanting group study areas where they can work together because our curriculum now is demanding that they work in partnerships."

To Peter Sidorko, one traditional library feature, the function of answering reference enquiries, is fading as students click on the internet and find their own answers. Yet he sees it as vital that they understand that the Library stocks high powered digital resources and books, unknown to Google, and has expert staff who can help with a variety of information related needs.

Library use training

"Library use training is not high on the list of

students' priorities, yet it is something we do really well. Teaching them to access, to use, and to use ethically, information is something they need to know," Mr Sidorko emphasises. "I mean here undergraduates, because getting them at the beginning is important, and postgraduates for refreshers and for advanced skills; for example, managing citations for their theses."

Peter Sidorko believes that since the early days of the Fung Ping Shan benefaction, the Library has changed not just physically but spiritually. "We want to be a primary supporter of teaching and learning and research, recognising the variety of needs that our students and faculty require in an information rich world."

Faculty and students need the broadest information. There is a dedicated librarian for each Faculty to help with specific discipline-based information resources and services. Mr Sidorko emphasises that the Library is not there to serve them just traditional print or standard electronic material. "We have much less traditional information and many staff with diverse skill sets. Seek us out. We want to be partners." ■



Level 3, situated on the 3rd floor of the Main Library, comprises five zones – Technology, Breakout, Multi-purpose, Collaboration and Study – providing students a variety of learning spaces.



Triple Bottom Line

A soap recycling enterprise by members from the School of Business benefits the environment, promotes hygiene and gives students an invaluable opportunity to lead.

Internships can be a great opportunity for students to experience daily working life inside a company related to their field, but they do have a drawback: students come in at a very junior level and are not often given the chance to make decisions, nor to suffer the consequences when they make mistakes.

This situation has motivated David Bishop, BBA(Law) and LLB Programme Coordinator and Senior Teaching Consultant in the School of Business, to put the ball in the students' court and let them run their own enterprises.

"You can't be a leader until you get the opportunity to make mistakes and fail," he says. "So I thought why not give students a company and let them run it for me. They

would get a chance to be entrepreneurs without risking capital, and I would provide guidance, resources, contacts and support."

Soap Cycling is born

Their first enterprise is Soap Cycling, a company that collects little-used soap from hotels, recycles it and distributes it in Hong Kong and developing countries to help enhance hygiene. As nearly 30 per cent of all deaths for children under five years old stem from diseases that can be dramatically reduced simply by washing hands with soap, Soap Cycling aims to not only remove thousands of kilos of waste from landfills, but also to save lives.

The planning began in 2011 and in September last year the project was officially launched.

Students applied for funding, organised workshops and a press conference, and staged a carnival with three weeks' notice, while Mr Bishop and other board members lined up advisors and private donors from the community.

The students have also recycled the soap themselves. About 25 hotels, such as the two Disneyland hotels and the Renaissance HK Harbour View, agreed to donate bars of soap left behind by guests that would otherwise be thrown away. The soap is scraped to remove impurities, and when necessary, combined into new bars. It is stored in a warehouse space paid for by donors – New World Development and the Chow Tai Fook Charity Foundation are big supporters – before being sent or brought to places in the region that can use the soap.

The soap is distributed through existing channels and through volunteers to communities where it can do the most good. The target is mainly schools and orphanages where children can learn about the importance of good hygiene practices at a young age.

"We make an impact"

Students have responded enthusiastically to their Soap Cycling involvement. Joyce Leung Ho-yan and Janice So Wing-in, both second-year BBA(Law) students, respectively the Communications Manager and Marketing Manager of Soap Cycling, say their experience has been invaluable.

"I feel I learn so much faster than being in an organisation where they tell me what to do," says Joyce. "And I've met people I never



Soap Cycling collects soap from local hotels



Janice (left) and Joyce (right), both second-year BBA(Law) students, have gained valuable experience through participating in Soap Cycling.

would have expected to meet as a student, such as the head of the Chow Tai Fook Charity Foundation. It feels good, like we're on the same playing field."

Janice was impressed by the speed at which they were able to get Soap Cycling up and running given their academic and other commitments.

"I learn every day in this organisation and I feel everything I do here makes an impact on the world. That's the kind of satisfaction that keeps me working," she says.

A youth movement

These are early days, though. Donations recently enabled the project to purchase a machine to do the recycling work and greatly increase the output – more than 40 other



David Bishop at the Soap Cycling Official Launch

"I learn every day in this organisation and I feel everything I do here makes an impact on the world."

Janice So Wing-in, second-year BBA(Law) student

hotels want to join Soap Cycling and soon there will be the capacity to include them. A General Manager was also appointed early this year to oversee the enterprise under a structure that closely involves the students.

The main board consists of Mr Bishop and other HKU academic staff and donors. But directly beneath them are student directors in charge of such areas as production, collection, marketing and communications, accounting, human resources, and legal.

"If they make a mistake, because they will and they do, guys like me are there to fill in the gaps. We don't want to hold their hands but we understand they need some guidance," he says.

"But this is a real position. Their faces will be on the webpage, they have business cards. If they don't do their jobs they will be fired. What I always tell students and our corporate sponsors is that this is not a company so much as a youth movement."

In the long run, he says, they hope to franchise Soap Cycling to other universities in Asia,

translating this youth movement into a regional force.

For more information about Soap Cycling, go to www.soapcycling.org and [Facebook.com/soapcycling](https://www.facebook.com/soapcycling). ■



From left: David Bishop, Justen Li (BBA(Law) and LLB graduate), Renata Ng (BBA(Law), Year 1), Timothy Tai (BBA(Law), Year 2) at the Soap Cycling Workshop in Zero Carbon Building Open Day.



Soap Making Workshop with UNICEF to promote Global Handwashing Day

Finding Cultural Heritage in a Bamboo Shed

The Faculty of Education is helping keep Hong Kong's cultural heritage alive, first by integrating Cantonese Opera into the school curriculum and now by turning 'bamboo shed' opera houses into a venue for learning.



Students visit a bamboo shed opera house in Ho Sheung Heung in Sheung Shui

For the past six years, a dedicated team from the Faculty of Education has been working hard to inspire Hong Kong's younger generation to take an interest in Cantonese Opera, a traditional art form that has been declining in popularity, particularly among the young.

Beginning in 2006, the Faculty's Centre for Advancement of Chinese Language Education and Research (CACLER) is led by Assistant Professor Dr Dorothy Ng Fung-ping, along with Assistant Professor Mr Lam Wai-ip and Mr Alain M F Lo, Teaching Consultant with the Faculty.

They worked together with partnering schools, under the HKU Cantonese Opera Education and Research Project, to integrate Cantonese Opera into the secondary school curriculum.

"Back in 2006–2007 the Chinese Curriculum in secondary schools in Hong Kong was under reform, and an elective in drama was introduced," says Mr Lo. "Students needed to act or participate in a drama activity to promote their Chinese language ability. So we thought Cantonese Opera was a good means to do this."

He adds that reading Cantonese Opera scripts also helped secondary students improve their comprehension techniques when reading classical Chinese passages, thereby helping them with a part of the Diploma of Secondary Education (DSE) that many struggle with.

Intangible Cultural Heritage

In 2009, CACLER's work was given a major boost when UNESCO added Cantonese Opera to its list of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) – it was Hong Kong's first admission to the list. Then in 2011, UNESCO added four more Hong Kong items of ICH to its list, namely: the Fire Dragon Dance in Tai Hang; the Dragon Boat Tour in Tai O; Cheung Chau Bun Festival; and the Chiu Chow Bun Festival.

"This created momentum, and the government took notice and started to think seriously about how to sustain our heritage and cultural education," says Dr Ng. "As a result, we were given HK\$160,000 in sponsorship by the Lord Wilson Heritage Trust (LWHT) to carry out a new enterprise entitled 'The Bamboo Shed Cantonese Opera Education and Publication Project'."

Collaboration with schools

CACLER collaborated with five secondary schools in teaching students about Hong



From left: Dr Dorothy Ng Fung-ping, Chief Secretary for Administration, The Hon Mrs Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor, Mr Lam Wai-ip and Mr Choi Kai-kwong, Project Manager, at the opening of the Lord Wilson Heritage Trust Exhibition.



Leading actor Mr Lung Koon-tin guiding the students during a cultural exploration session in a bamboo shed opera house on Cheung Chau

“I'm proud to say our project was chosen as one of the 10 highlights of the Lord Wilson Heritage Trust to be celebrated at the 20th anniversary of the founding of the trust.”

Dr Dorothy Ng Fung-ping

Kong's Intangible Cultural Heritage through field visits to 'bamboo shed' operas and various activities to familiarise them with aspects of Cantonese Opera, ranging from performance, rituals, dance steps to scripts. In short, they sought to turn the bamboo shed into a learning space as well as a cultural space.

'Bamboo shed' is the local nickname for the temporary opera theatres – vast structures comprising a bamboo framework covered with metal sheeting – where travelling opera troupes stage performances as they tour towns in southern China and Hong Kong.

"I'm proud to say our project was chosen as one of the 10 highlights of the LWHT to be celebrated at the 20th anniversary of the founding of the trust," says Dr Ng. "The project outcome, including an introductory video, was displayed at a roving exhibition of the LWHT being shown in Hong Kong in January, starting at the Hong Kong Heritage

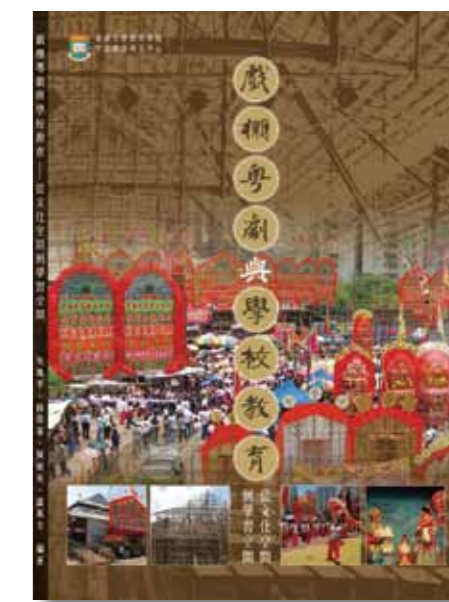
Museum in Tsim Sha Tsui, and hosted by the Home Affairs Bureau."

CACLER has also published *Bamboo Shed Cantonese Opera and School Education: From Cultural Space to Learning Space*, the research output of the project. It includes various studies of project-based learning of bamboo shed Cantonese Opera, and also serves as a reference for educators and teachers on how to integrate Cantonese Opera and ICH into formal curriculum.

The latest exciting development in the project, explains team member Mr Lam Wai-ip, is that the programme is going to be used in a school in Tai O where some of the students are not local and do not speak Cantonese. "We hope to use Cantonese Opera as a means to help these students learn Cantonese in a more fun and interesting way," he adds.

Dr Ng also wants to see the promotion of more local ICH in education, and is currently having

meetings with the Buddhist Fat Ho Memorial College about the possibility of integrating the Tai O Dragon Boat Water Parade into the formal curriculum, and promoting other traditional festive events like Tai Hang Fire Dragon Dance. ■



Bamboo Shed Cantonese Opera and School Education: From Cultural Space to Learning Space

MARKETING DEATH

Culture and the Making of
a Life Insurance Market in China



Marketing Death: Life Insurance in China

Insurance can indeed be interesting, as sociologist Dr Cheri Chan found out when studying how this very Western creation has been adapted to Chinese cultural values.

If any product represents modernity, it is life insurance, which takes something seemingly immeasurable – the unpredictable loss of human life and limb – and puts a dollar value on it. As Associate Professor of Sociology Dr Cheri Chan points out, “It’s an extreme form of rationalisation.”

It was always going to be a hard sell, but in the West the insurance companies got around resistance from those who regarded human life as priceless by imbuing their products with deeper meaning. Life insurance became a way to look after loved ones if you prematurely passed away.

In China, however, there has been stubborn resistance to such risk management. The root cause has been the Chinese taboo of thinking and talking about death, says Dr Chan who has written a book on the Chinese life insurance industry based on extensive interviews and historical research.

“In Chinese societies there is an incompatibility between life insurance and Chinese cultural values,” she says. Death, especially premature death, is a taboo topic in China, something Dr Chan credits to a combination of the lack of a concept of life after death in Confucianism and the miserable and horrific afterlife depicted in folk Taoism and folk Buddhism. Even if one doesn’t believe in these depictions, it can be socially offensive to discuss death.

Not buying the risk concept

As a consequence of their avoidance of the topic of death, the Chinese do not believe that misfortunes will befall them. Nor do they embrace the idea of insuring against an uncertain future because they already have a long-established habit of saving. All of these factors made them decidedly unenthusiastic when foreign companies began selling risk-based life insurance there in 1992.



“They told stories of misfortunes of families that experienced accidents. This... didn’t work in China. People didn’t like to hear of these misfortunes.”

Dr Cheri Chan

“With life insurance you are not just selling a product, you are selling a concept,” Dr Chan says. “When foreign insurance companies first arrived they tried to raise people’s sense of awareness that accidents could happen to anyone at any time. They told stories of misfortunes of families that experienced accidents. This was similar to the strategy they used in the US, but it didn’t work in China. People didn’t like to hear of these misfortunes.”

It took a local company that understood what Chinese people did and did not want, to give the industry the boost it needed to survive in the Mainland market.

Insurance as a savings product

Ping An began selling insurance in 1994 but

instead of focusing on risk management products, it promoted savings products for retirement and children benefits. It also recruited a large number of part-time sales agents, such as housewives, who used their interpersonal networks and ‘guanxi’ to increase sales.

The products themselves offered attractive financial returns, at least for awhile. Ping An would spend the next 10 years on a rollercoaster of offering seemingly moneymaking products, including one linked to the stock exchange, that would subsequently run into trouble as the macro environment changed. However, the company survived. In 2002 it started to pull back from money management products to follow the Western risk management model more closely.

But here it came up against the same taboos that foreign insurers had encountered. The products were not very popular.

“We can see that when companies shift to selling money management then the market grows. When they shift to risk management the market shrinks,” Dr Chan says.

The taboo persists

Today both foreign and domestic companies offer money management products – a current favourite is ‘dividend insurance’ – while risk management is a slow grower. Dr Chan has found a similar pattern in Hong Kong and Taiwan, whose societies have been more stable and affluent over the longer term, suggesting the taboo on discussing or thinking about death runs deep in Chinese society.

It even persists after intense training by insurance companies on the merits of risk insurance. Dr Chan accompanied one Chinese insurance agent on a visit to a client. The client and his wife were in their 40s and had a teenage son, but the husband did not want to buy life insurance. His reason was that he wanted his son to be financially independent and didn’t want to leave him a lump sum. Afterwards, Dr Chan asked the agent why she didn’t suggest that the man name his wife as the beneficiary.

“The agent said that the man and his wife were the same age. What she meant was that they would pass away at about the same time. So the agent didn’t think this man would have an accident tomorrow.” Yet the possibility of such accidents is the fundamental basis of life insurance.

“The companies try to provide training, but you won’t be able to change someone’s cultural concepts,” Dr Chan adds. ■



African-style bicycle chic

Cycling through Space and Time

The bicycle was the first mass-produced form of human-powered transport. As such, it's a fascinating symbol of the world's progress and yearnings over the past 120 years, as a forthcoming book illustrates.

The bicycle has been all things to all people, associated with both Chinese communism and Western industrial capitalism, high-tech luxury and back-to-nature movements, women's liberation and patriarchy. Mix that together with its intimate associations with modernity and continued symbolic strength in a post-modern world, and it is a rich subject of study.

Dr Paul Smethurst, Associate Professor of School of English, is putting the finishing touches to a book that looks at how the bicycle as an everyday object has reflected social change and at the same time marked the modern experience of space and time, starting from the West and spreading around the globe.

"As a prime example of everyday technology, the bicycle lends itself to comparative historical and trans-regional analysis. It is the subject of a complex history in which its cultural value provides a lexicon for the social formation of global modernity," he says.

Predecessors to the modern bicycle were mainly clumsy playthings of the rich, but when the safety bicycle was developed in Europe in the 1880s – incorporating new inventions such as the ball bearing, pneumatic tire and reverse tension spokes in wheels – it captured the imagination of the wider public. "A seminal product of the second industrial revolution, the bicycle's other connection with modernity

was social modernity and the imperative for mobility," he says.

Social mobility

The mobility provided by the bicycle enlarged local labour pools and empowered workers, as well as provided recreational exercise. It influenced the development of the suburbs and changed relations between city and countryside. As it spread through the classes it became a social leveller, going from a novelty for the wealthy to a recreational vehicle for the middle class and a necessity for the working class. Each generation has reinvented it and found new purposes for it, up to the latest carbon fibre luxury bicycles costing US\$7,000.

“It became an expression of the struggle of the mind to overcome the inertia of matter.”

Dr Paul Smethurst

Women in particular became enthusiastic cyclists and an estimated 30 to 50 per cent of bicycles sold in London in the 1890s were to women. "Bicycle mobility provided a very visible sign of the transformations and conflicts in gender relations and in the (re-)gendering of social space in late Victorian society," Dr Smethurst says.

The material and symbolic presence of the bicycle made it a common object of study in art (particularly the new field of lithography) and literature. "It became an expression of the struggle of the mind to overcome the inertia of matter," he says.

Slow to take up in China

In Asia, Japan was the first to modernise and as such was the first to adopt the bicycle, soon producing its own. China was one of the last places in Asia to embrace the bicycle, despite the pervasive image of urban streets clogged with thousands of Chinese on their bikes.

The Chinese were curious but largely indifferent to the bicycle when foreigners brought it to the Treaty Ports in the 1890s. Workers could not

afford it and rich Chinese were more inclined to pay others to carry them in sedan chairs or in rickshaws. The first Chinese bicycle factory was established by a Japanese entrepreneur around 1930.

"The bicycle industry began to figure in the state policy of the nationalists, but when the communists came to power in the 1940s, the bicycle was yoked to another revolution in which it would become an emblem for a unified, working-class China," Dr Smethurst says.

The decline of the bicycle in China is indicative of economic and social change. The number of bicycles on the road in China decreased by 35 per cent between 1995 and 2005, falling from 670 million to 435 million, while the number of registered motor vehicles in China has now reached 233 million.

Internal contradictions

A significant difference between the introduction of the bicycle in Asia and Africa compared with the West was that it reinforced a gender divide. While it was associated with the New Woman in



the West, in developing countries women were largely excluded.

The bicycle continues to be imbued with many meanings. In recent years it has been presented as a prop for selling designer clothes, and a vehicle of choice for anti-globalisation campaigners. And while trendsetters from New York to Shanghai splash out thousands of dollars for a bicycle for ostentatious exercise, you would find it hard to locate a children's model in Africa where bicycles remain an object of necessity.

"Given its global everyday social embeddedness, the future of the bicycle seems assured; it continues to operate as a telling, if contradictory, symbol of the times," Dr Smethurst adds.

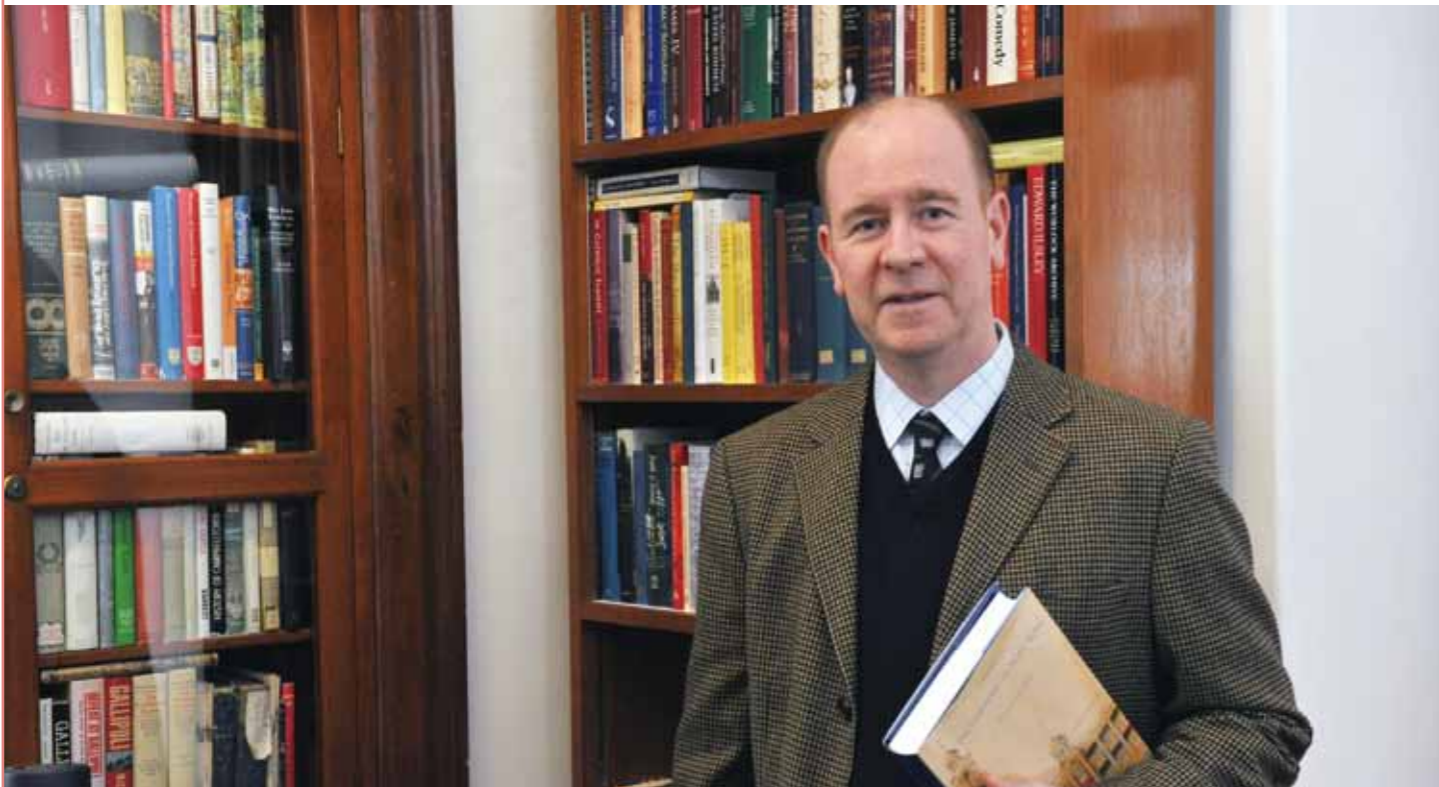
The Bicycle will be published by Reaktion Books as part of their 'Objekt' series later this year. ■



The Dandy Horse, 1819.

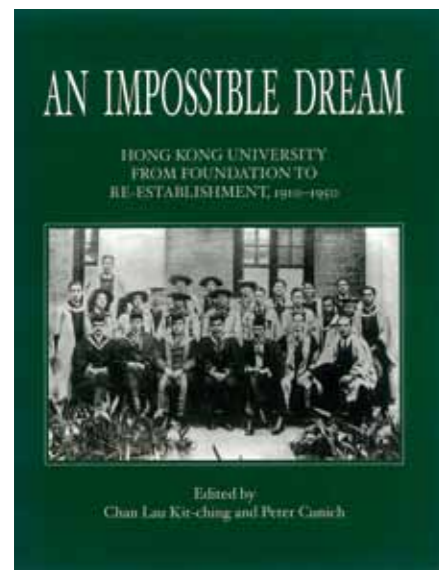


The Art of Recycling, Burning Man Festival 2007.



A Living History

Heroes and traitors, fighters and founders – Dr Peter Cunich's history gives HKU a fascinatingly human face.



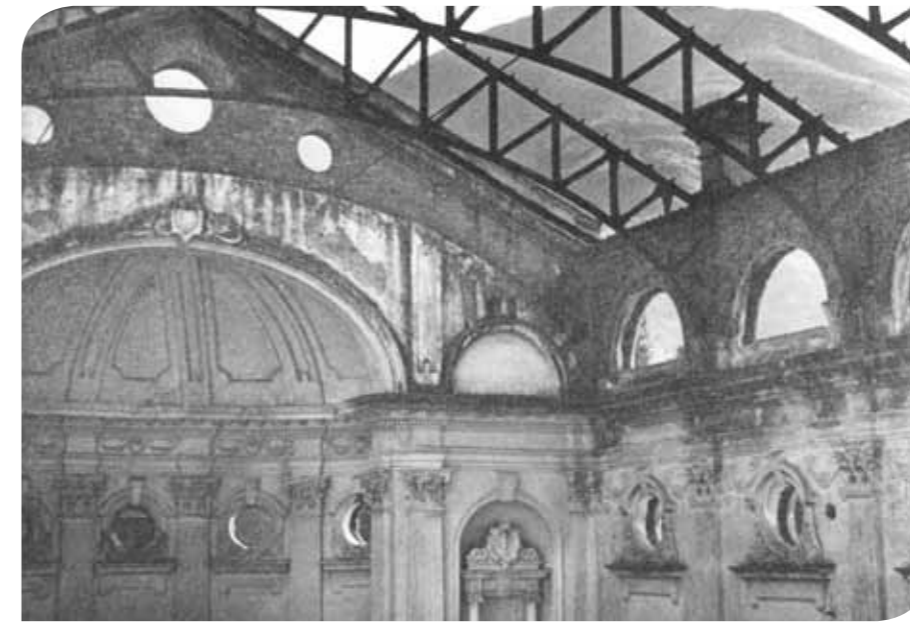
An Impossible Dream: Hong Kong University from Foundation to Re-establishment, 1910-1950 published in 2002 was a 90th-anniversary project by Faculty of Arts.

As HKU celebrates its centenary it is only fitting that a scholarly work on the University's history should be produced. What is perhaps more surprising is that the work that has emerged is not only the history of an institution but also a very lively, very human narrative.

"This was deliberate," says author Dr Peter Cunich. "We began thinking about the centenary book back in 1999 when we were compiling *An Impossible Dream*, the book to mark the University's 90th anniversary. I was determined that the centenary book should have an authentic voice. I didn't want to simply retell the administrative and constitutional history; I also wanted to have people's personal experiences within the text."

To this end, he began interviewing as many of the pre-war and war-time students as he could track down. "From 2003 on, I started seeking out graduates and alumni who had been at the University before 1941, war-time students and those involved in re-establishing the University post-war. Hopefully readers will identify with these first-hand accounts."

Most of those interviews contributed to what would become Dr Cunich's favourite chapter, Chapter 9 which covers the War years. "The stories I was told were fascinating. It emerged that in the 1940s, HKU was on the international stage in a way it had seldom been up until the last few years when we've become one of the top 25 universities in the world."



An interior view of the roofless Great Hall in the Main Building, taken after the World War II.

Traitorous acts

The University, both faculty and students, played an important role in World War II – much of it noble, but some of it less so. "The point that I make in Chapter 9 is that you have a range of reactions to the Japanese [invasion of Hong Kong]. Some people resisted, others went along with it in the quietest way they could, while others actively collaborated and committed traitorous acts," says Dr Cunich.

"While the older generation tended to try to look after themselves, the younger students and graduates went to free China, joined the British Army Aid Group (BAAG), the Chinese Army, various other units of the British Army, even the US Air Force, actively fighting against the Japanese."

"What is interesting – partly because it has relevance today – is that they were fighting for a mixture of things: their home – whether that was Hong Kong or Malaya – defending their home from the Japanese. But they were also fighting for Britain because most of them saw the Japanese as the aggressors and Britain as upholding the values of civilisation (significant because this is what the University was originally meant to inculcate – a love of Empire). And then the third level was Chinese patriotism."

"The War allowed these students to do all three things at once – they could fight for their home, show that they held to Western ideals, and at the same time be Chinese patriots by fighting for China."

Dr Cunich feels that this fits in very interestingly with some of the current controversy about Hong Kong identity. "Today there is a polarisation, a feeling that you can only be one thing or the other. For these war-time students they could be all three at once and there was no paradox in that. They come out of the whole experience completely changed people and many went on to become leaders in Hong Kong, Singapore or Kuala Lumpur, taking up roles in society that pre-war graduates were not able to do."

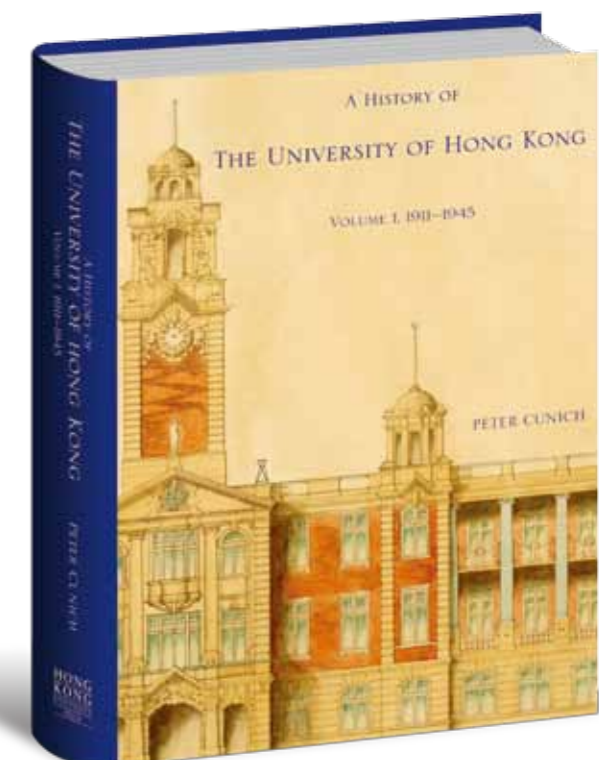
Dispelling urban myths

While writing Chapter 9 proved a fascinating experience, other areas of the book were more problematic. "Some of the urban myths that over the years have been established as history are difficult to dislodge," says

“The War allowed these students to do all three things at once – they could fight for their home, show that they held to Western ideals, and at the same time be Chinese patriots by fighting for China.”

Dr Peter Cunich

Dr Cunich. "For instance it is widely accepted that Dr Sun Yat-sen was a graduate, and many still believe that HKU started with only two faculties, Engineering and Medicine, and Arts came later."



A History of the University of Hong Kong, Volume 1, 1911-1945 by Dr Peter Cunich, School of Humanities.



Dr Peter Cunich at the HKU Libraries Centenary Book Talk: Forging a HKU Identity, 1905–1945.

“The reason I dedicated the book to the students in the War years is because their stories are exceptional – in any time or place these are stories that are legendary.”

Dr Peter Cunich

The book corrects both. Dr Sun Yat-sen was a licentiate of the Hong Kong College of Medicine for Chinese, which was founded in 1887. And while it is true that HKU’s founder Sir Frederick Lugard did not want a Faculty of Arts because he feared it might inspire insurrection and radicalism within the student body, the local Chinese community insisted on establishing an Arts Faculty.

Another problem was the mammoth task of gathering information on the University, much of which came from abroad – the Colonial Office and the School of Oriental and African Studies archives in London, plus other material in Russia, Germany, the US and even in Australia – and then condensing it all into a book.

“There was so much we didn’t know, including information in our own archives,” says Dr Cunich. “As we approached the deadline, the sheer size of the text was a problem.” A decision had to be taken on whether to cut

much of the text or go to two volumes – that second volume, covering the second half of the century, is currently being written.

Instrument of Empire

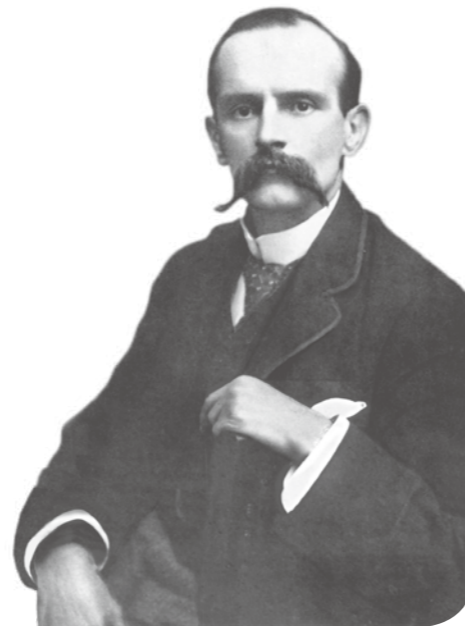
Having gone through so much material, Dr Cunich feels that one of the most important discoveries has been the light that has been shed on the very early years and the role that HKU played in imperial policy in China. “The idea that HKU was somehow going to be an instrument of Empire that would help the British establish good relations with China was central to the University’s role,” he says. “The intention was to do this through cultural imperialism and HKU became more and more the centre of that policy.”

While founder Sir Frederick Lugard held this view back in 1911 when HKU was established, London only really agreed with it in the 1930s when China was at war with Japan and Britain was trying to help China, while at the same time

competing with the Americans. “They saw HKU as one of the ways to get a foot in the door,” says Dr Cunich.

The name of Lugard recurs frequently throughout the book. While this is unsurprising at the start, few have realised until now how long his influence continued. He left Hong Kong in 1912 but continued to support the University until his death in 1948. Dr Cunich interviewed Lugard’s great niece who said he considered the University his greatest achievement. That interview would also bring to light the original architectural drawings of the Main Building that were used on the cover of the book. “It was a great coup to get the original drawings back as we thought they had been lost.”

Dr Cunich has been a historian with HKU for the past 20 years, but he says that writing this book threw up many new discoveries and became an inspirational experience. “Meeting such fascinating people and hearing their extraordinary stories has been very inspiring – far more so than I originally expected,” he says. “The reason I dedicated the book to the students in the War years is because their stories are exceptional – in any time or place these are stories that are legendary.” ■



Sir Frederick Lugard, Chancellor 1911–1912.



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