

Knowledge exchange and community engagement: An Academic library perspective

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Abstract

Purpose – The article seeks to document the strategies and initiatives developed in a major Asian academic library aiming to enhance the library’s role in promoting knowledge exchange and community well-being.

Design/methodology/approach – The article examines the library’s role in knowledge exchange at the university. It highlights a series of initiatives undertaken by the library that serve to promote community access to collections, services and special events. It also introduces ways in which the library has reached out to the local, regional and international communities.

Findings – The success of the initiatives is demonstrated in many ways including the devoted commitment to making information available to the public at both university and library level, extended access to the library resources and services, active public participation in the special events and the library’s increased visibility and leadership in the local, regional and international communities.

Research limitations/implications – While many of the initiatives have been innovative and well received, the reality remains that the true emphasis of knowledge exchange within the university lies with the faculties. Licensing agreements also impose restrictions on access to the electronic resources by a larger user group. The traditional “closed door” policy due to the space shortage inevitably limits the library’s ability to engage a wider community. Further studies need to be done on the investment and return of the book talks.

Practical implications – While it is often cited that public libraries are those that serve the community at large, this article provides the perspective from an academic library

viewpoint and emphasizes the view that such service should not be limited to public libraries alone and that academic libraries must play a role in community well-being.

Social implications– Academic libraries are provided with practical examples of how one such library has contributed to society. Many of these examples could readily be introduced into other academic libraries to help them support their local, regional and global communities.

Originality/value – The article provides a practical example for academic libraries in attempting to play an active role in knowledge exchange and community engagement.

Keywords: Knowledge exchange, Knowledge transfer, Open access, Academic libraries, Hong Kong, Outreach, Institutional repository, Community participation, Community engagement, Well-being, Partnership

Introduction

Universities have long been accused of complicity with the “ivory tower syndrome” in which they fail to successfully connect with everyday society. Such academic elitism is particularly inconsistent for academic institutions whose primary source of funding is government monies raised through the taxing of its citizens. Yet in recent years significant shifts have occurred that have made academic institutions more attuned with their communities, business, government and the public. Opportunities for collaborations that serve to enhance the human condition are at the forefront of these changes. For academic institutions this concept of “knowledge transfer” (or knowledge exchange) is increasingly seen as critical to the strategic future for many.

The University of Hong Kong Libraries has long recognized the significance of its position in Hong Kong Society. As the oldest and leading University in Hong Kong, and one of Asia’s finest, it has a rich collection of resources that are of great interest to communities beyond its immediate family, including both local and global communities. As one of only three strategic themes, the University’s new strategic direction of “knowledge exchange” has given the Library added motivation to excel in engaging the community, beyond the University.

Knowledge Transfer in Hong Kong

The concept of knowledge transfer is one that many universities across the globe have embraced in order to eliminate the ivory tower syndrome and to make “a sustained contribution to the economic, social and cultural well-being of society” (The

University of Melbourne, 2010). At the University of Hong Kong (HKU) a recently revised strategic plan has placed a renewed emphasis on partnerships with society. The concept of knowledge transfer has been broadened to that of knowledge exchange, in recognition of the fact that rarely is it a one-way relationship when academia and society meet. This renewed emphasis in partnering with society is now enshrined as one of the University's three strategic themes. "Promoting knowledge exchange and demonstrating leadership in communities in the region", now ranks as important an area of the University's business as the other two themes, namely "enhancing the student learning experience" and "advancing research and innovation". The University defines knowledge exchange as "engaging, for mutual benefit, with business, government or the public to generate, acquire, apply and make accessible the knowledge needed to enhance material, human, social, cultural and environmental well-being. It not only includes technology transfer but also encompasses all disciplines, including the arts and humanities and the social sciences, and is a two-way process" (The University of Hong Kong, 2009).

As added motivation for participating in knowledge transfer, or knowledge exchange, the universities funding body in Hong Kong, The University Grants Committee (UGC), has earmarked special funding over a three year period to be awarded to the eight universities to undertake knowledge transfer related activities in order "to strengthen institutions' capacity in translating their expertise and research findings into real economic and social improvements" (University Grants Committee, 2009).

Knowledge Exchange and the Libraries

Established in 1912, the Libraries is the oldest academic library in Hong Kong with over 2.8 million volumes of physical collections. In addition to these physical collections, the electronic resources have witnessed a rapid growth in recent years. The Libraries now consists of the Main Library and six specialist libraries namely the Dental, Education, Fung Ping Shan (East Asian Language), Yu Chun Keung Medical, Lui Che Woo Law and the Music Library. They are located along with their related faculties in and around the campus except that the Fung Ping Shan Library occupies part of the Main Library Building. The Libraries at the University of Hong Kong (HKUL) has for many years been engaged in knowledge exchange related activities and has been recognized by the University as an "existing organ of knowledge exchange" and a key player in supporting the University's new strategic direction.

Contributing through Content

Open Access

The University Library hosted in May 2007 the first Open Access conference in Hong Kong. The conference, *Promoting 21st Century Scholarly Communication: The Role of Institutional Repositories in the Open Access Movement*, marked a new era of awareness and commitment to open access in Hong Kong. As open access has an unmistakable goal of increasing public access to research emanating from universities and other research organizations, it is clearly a significant tool for facilitating knowledge exchange within the academic context. Even beyond this, Eysenbach (2006) identified three major advantages of open access, namely (1) increased citation counts, (2) increased access by end users, and (3) increased cross-disciplinary fertilization. These three aspects confirm the suitability of open access to knowledge exchange in terms of the HKU definition, as there is knowledge that is being made accessible, and there is mutual benefit being achieved. For the University this benefit is in the form of increased citation counts and cross-disciplinary fertilization. For the University Grants Committee, all three benefits are consistent with their strategic requirements.

At the Libraries' suggestion, the Vice Chancellor and President, Professor Lap-Chee Tsui, signed the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities in November 2009 making us the first institution in Hong Kong and the fifth in Asia to do so. Signing this declaration confirms the Universities' commitment to making information widely and readily available to society. Signatories must implement a policy requiring their researchers to deposit a copy of all their published articles in an open access repository and encourage their researchers to publish their research articles in open access journals where a suitable journal exists and provide the support to enable that to happen. In order to set an example for the University, the Libraries unanimously agreed to adopt such a policy for all relevant output by library staff.

The HKU Scholars Hub

The major vehicle for promoting open access to the University's intellectual output is our institutional repository, the HKU Scholars Hub (The University of Hong Kong, 2010). Like many universities and research organizations worldwide, the Libraries' institutional repository has consumed, in ever increasing amounts, considerable resources, both human and financial. As the University's primary resource for freely disseminating its intellectual content, a number of initiatives for enhancing the Hub have been pursued or are currently being pursued. Funding from the UGC's knowledge transfer initiative has served to partially cover the costs associated with some of these developments. Underpinning most of these enhancements are the

ResearcherPages. These *ResearcherPages* enable, display and measure significant components of the University's knowledge exchange endeavours. They also allow industry, government and academia to find an expert in the University for contract research, consulting and collaboration. Following initial creation by the Hub administrators, they allow the owning individual to further maintain and enhance their own pages. The sources of data for the pages are harvested from a number of local university sources (for contact details, biographical information and areas of expertise) as well as from Elsevier's Scopus (for bibliometric data). In many ways these pages not only help to promote access to the University's intellectual content but they also serve as "relationship management" tools by enhancing access between the individual researchers and their pages with the broader community.

Digitisation Projects

The Libraries have been involved in numerous digitization projects both alone and in partnership. Most of the outcomes of these projects are now mounted on the library's web page and most are freely available to all who care to access them. Many treasures from our collections are now readily accessible to all, making our collections come alive. One related project that is far more than mere digitization, is the Hong Kong Jockey Club and Hong Kong Government sponsored oral history project known as the Hong Kong Memory Project, which is Hong Kong's response to UNESCO's "Memory of the World" Project aimed at preserving historical records through digitization. The Library has contributed to this project in numerous ways including the supply of content, technological support and staff expertise. The end product of the project will be an oral history website that will preserve Hong Kong collective memory through a centralised digital repository for the collection, conservation, presentation and dissemination of Hong Kong's historical and cultural heritage and will rival any similar such site across the globe. It will serve as a major community resource for all Hong Kong people and those with interests in Hong Kong history, architecture, culture, customs etc.

Contributing through Access

HKUL Circle of Friends

Due to space and other resources constraints, the Libraries has a long heritage of mainly serving its own current staff and students. Free access to library services by non-HKU members is limited to certain categories of users only. As a result, the public community at large was not given a choice to opt for a fee-based service. In 2003, the HKUL Circle of Friends was established with aims to support the extension and improvement of the services and resources of the Libraries, encourage the use of

the Libraries' services and facilities by all members of the community, and encourage and support literacy in the community (The University of Hong Kong Libraries, 2003). Individuals and institutions are able to become a member and with a moderate annual fee, enjoy various library privileges. HKU alumni and HKU SPACE alumni Platinum members are also able to access selected electronic resources remotely. By April 2010, there were about 3,358 members from different age groups (above 16) and all walks of society. Meanwhile, HKUL Circle of Friends also organizes a series of events and activities which involve extensive community participation. As a result, the Libraries has not only strengthened its role in promoting community literacy and well-being, but also increased the social awareness and recognition about the Libraries among the public.

Visitors Card Partnership with Hong Kong Public Libraries

The Libraries has a long practice to grant free access to Hong Kong citizens 3 days a year if they can demonstrate genuine research needs. However, it is not an easy task for a local citizen to prove this need. To meet the real needs of such citizens, on 30 May 2007, HKU Libraries collaborated with the Hong Kong Public Libraries (HKPL) to launch a referral service for HKPL's registered library readers. Under this service, HKPL's users, who find the resources in the public library system cannot satisfy their research needs, can apply for a HKU Libraries temporary reader's ticket valid for three days. It aims to facilitate readers who have a genuine need to carry out in-depth research to access the resources of the HKU Libraries.

Contributing through Special Events

Book Talks

The Libraries Reading Club was created in 2002 in order to promote the cultural and intellectual life of Hong Kong. The Reading Club has been sponsoring a series of book talks featuring leading members of the Hong Kong intellectual community. The talks usually take place on selected Thursday nights in the Special Collections area and are open to all of the public. The public can revisit the e-video of each book talk from the library homepage anytime, anywhere.

Since 2006, invited guest speakers have included distinguished academics, renowned writers, politicians, entrepreneurs, etc. The talks cover a wide range of books on various themes with a focus on Hong Kong's culture, history, social and political issues. Books of general or global interests are also welcome. To name a few:

- ♦ *Pride and Prejudice/Jane Austin* (Speaker: Mrs. Anson Chan, the former Chief Secretary for Administration of HKSAR);

- ♦ *Mao: The Unknown Story* / Jung Chang and Jon Halliday (Speaker: Professor Wang Gungwu, former HKU Vice Chancellor);
- ♦ *A Talk by Dr Chiang Chen (蔣震博士) : On Reading* (Speaker: Dr Chiang Chen (蔣震博士), Founder of Chen Hsong Group and Chiang Chen Industrial Charity Foundation);
- ♦ 《港女聖經》和《港男筆記》*The Kong Girls Bible and A Memoir of a Kong Man* (Speaker: Mr Yip Yat Chee);
- ♦ *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century* / Thomas L. Friedman (Speaker: Gordon Chang, Counsel to the American law firm Paul Weiss, Shanghai);
- ♦ 《龍應台的香港筆記》 新書發佈暨演講會 (Speaker: Professor Lung Ying-tai).

Book sales

The Libraries has organized 5 book sales since 2006. The books for sale are duplicates donated by library supporters or withdrawn copies from the library collection. Books from various subjects, both in Chinese and English, are priced at HK\$20 and up. Also available is a selection of fiction for leisure reading. Putting the duplicates and withdrawn copies on sale not only promotes reading by allowing the public to get the books they need at a very reasonable price, but also fully utilises these materials. In total, more than 29,000 books were sold and the sales generated about HK\$587,000 in revenue. Proceeds from the sales will contribute towards the purchase of new books, library materials, programmes or services. This two-day public event proves to be a great way not only to bring the Libraries friends, alumni and HKU community into the Libraries, but also to promote a culture of reading in the community.

Exhibitions

Being aware that exhibitions could engage wide public participation, the Libraries has been hosting a series of exhibitions in the Main Library as well as the branch libraries. The exhibition themes range from library services to anything that can capture the community interests. Since 2005, around 42 exhibitions have been held in the Main Library which were contributed by the Libraries, University Faculties and Departments, individual members or organizations of the local communities. The exhibits, depending on the nature of the themes, may consist of diverse content, such as posters, theme books, manuscripts or bibliographies containing a list of readings on the theme recommended by the librarians, media playing, paintings, photos and other objects. This helps the visitors get the knowledge about a theme via multiple

sources. Some exhibitions are accompanied with talks and functions as well. For instance, *The Eileen Chang: Hong Kong Legend (1939~1941) Exhibition* contributed by the Journalism and Media Studies Centre as part of its Project for Public Culture and held in 2007 lasted for one month and was well received. During the exhibition period, a book talk about *Reading Eileen Chang with her thirty treasures* was also given to the public. Another exhibition on *Policing in Turbulent Hong Kong (1940-60s)* jointly organized by the Department of Sociology and Hong Kong Old Comrades' Association attracted a large number of visitors to come to the exhibition and a social function hosted at the Main Library. These exhibitions and accompanying events serve as an open platform for community participation in the enhancement of public cultural life in Hong Kong.

Honour with books

This programme was launched in 2003 by the Libraries and aims to provide a unique way to celebrate an occasion, acknowledge an accomplishment, show appreciation, pay a lasting tribute to a special person, while making a contribution to the Libraries to help enhance the Libraries collections in support of teaching, study and research. With a \$500 gift to the Honour with Books programme, a commemorative bookplate bearing the donor's name and the name of the person being honoured is placed in a new book purchased by the Libraries. A donor can also select a title from our collection with a gift of \$1,000. As an acknowledgement of the donor's thoughtfulness, a facsimile of the bookplate is sent to the honouree or to the family.

This programme was launched for Mother's Day 2003, accompanied with an exhibition on *Ten Notable Mothers*, a *Vote for your Favourite Notable Mother* and a Celebration Party co-organised with RTHK (Radio Television Hong Kong) which attracted more than 400 people including guests-of-honour, students, staff and the public. Furthermore, the Libraries launched an electronic version of Honour with Books on Teachers' Day 2007. Donors placed a message of tribute to their mentor in a book record of the HKU Libraries' Catalogue. This e-Honour with Books was well received. By the end of April 2010, there are 623 participants in this programme (The University of Hong Kong Libraries, 2003a). The much copied programme communicates to Hong Kong citizens the importance of books and contributes successfully to the personal, family and societal wellbeing.

Contributing to Special Local Groups

High Schools

In addition to the contributions the Libraries make to the Hong Kong, regional and global communities, there is also a need to recognize the immediate locality in which the University is located within Hong Kong. The University is located on Hong Kong Island in an area known as the Central and Western District. This area has a high concentration of schools, most of them being top grade. The Libraries accommodates visits from school groups on a regular basis, recognizing that these are our future students and providing them with an early, positive view of the role the library plays in the organization is a very constructive process. In order to further elaborate on this role, the Information Literacy Librarian has taken the opportunity to visit local high schools with a view to apprising students of the significant role an academic library plays in the teaching, learning and research processes as well as alerting them to the extensive growth of these resources, particularly in digital versions. This Secondary School Outreach Programme consists of: the visit to the school by the Information Literacy Librarian, incorporating a library skills session; a library tour, and; each student receiving a 3-day pass to visit and make use of the resources in the Library. The library skills session was built around the playing of a YouTube video to stir the students' awareness of a social issue (global warming). Following this students were directed to find information that discussed different sides of the issue. This process was done in the format of a game in that students needed to find the information from the catalogue and from article databases.

As a further extension of the service and commitment the Library makes to local schools we have renegotiated access rights to certain commercial collections of our electronic resources to include access by several local high schools. As a result, students can now access, from their school library computers, thousands of e-books, once again providing them with not only a range of resources that was previously beyond their reach, but a growing respect for digital information and the role of the library.

People with Disabilities

Acknowledging that there are certain groups of our community that are less advantaged than others, the Library has adopted affirmative action and has taken the initiative to employ local people with various disabilities. Among these we have employed for more than fifteen years workers from the Saint James' Settlement, a local social service agency that recognizes the potential and value of every human being and that enables individuals to help themselves and to help others (Saint James' Settlement, 2004). These workers with various and varying degrees of mental and physical disability, work in our Bindery and assist with cleaning duties in our libraries.

Through routine mechanical tasks, the trainees gained vocational skills and, more importantly confidence and satisfaction at work, which has really helped them to adapt to society. There have been several individual success stories emanating from this opportunity we have provided.

The Libraries also in recent years has employed hearing impaired workers to undertake general library assistant duties in our Access Services Department. Working through a Hong Kong Government scheme via the Selective Placement Service of the Labour Department, the Libraries hired three employees in 2006. Under the same scheme the Library Administration Department also hired one individual with autism. One of the hearing impaired individuals has subsequently resigned but the remaining three are stilling working in their respective divisions. We have strived to develop the potentials of these persons in order to facilitate their greater self-reliance but we have subsequently found them to be valuable workers and contributors to the workforce. Prior to all of these appointments the Library hired a hearing impaired individual to work in the technical services areas starting in 1994. Since this time, this individual has been promoted and has just recently received the award for “employee of the quarter”. Once again we have yielded excellent results from these appointments and individual success stories have been forthcoming.

In terms of our own students and staff: the Library provides specialist equipment through a dedicated room for visually impaired staff and students; we have representation on the University-wide Disability Action Committee; and, we have a librarian assigned to assist users with any of these special needs arising from a disability.

Contributing to Community Lifelong Learning

Established in 1956, the University’s continuing education unit, HKU SPACE (School of Professional and Continuing Education) provides learning opportunities for personal, professional and career advancement for people from all walks of life. It is very much at the forefront of lifelong education in Hong Kong with its three subject based colleges, College of Business and Finance, College of Humanities and Law and College of Life Sciences and Technology providing undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, diplomas, advanced and executive diplomas plus a range of further award earning programmes and comprising over 100,000 course enrolments every year. In more recent times, the School established two Community Colleges in 2000 and 2004 respectively. The Colleges offer sub-degree education through its associate degree and higher diploma programmes for Secondary 5 and 7 graduates. As both of these

arms of HKU SPACE are non-government funded or controlled, the Library is not in a position to offer the same services as it does for those staff and students funded under the government umbrella. Yet as these are valuable community educational institutions the Library provides services to the staff and students through a pay per use charging system. For a modest fee staff and students have access to the rich resources of our libraries and for a slightly higher fee can gain remote access to a selection of our electronic resources for which we have renegotiated licences to accommodate this category of user. In addition to providing access to resources, the library has provided advice as well as ordering and technical service support for the establishment and continued development of three major “learning centres” housed within the colleges.

Contributing to the Region

In line with the University’s vision “... contributing to the advancement of society and the development of leaders through a global presence, regional significance and engagement with the rest of China”, the Libraries has been striving to “serve as a focal point of intellectual and academic endeavour in Hong Kong, China and Asia and act as a gateway and forum for scholarship with the rest of the world” (The University of Hong Kong Libraries, 2007). In addition to the contributions to the Hong Kong local communities, the Libraries has been actively engaged in initiatives that will bring benefits to the regional and international communities.

Donations of Books to Sichuan and Other Libraries

After the devastating Sichuan earthquake in May 2008, the University developed various projects and programmes to render support for disaster relief and the reconstruction of the quake-affected communities. In response to the University’s initiatives, the Librarian and Assistant Fung Ping Shan Librarian responsible for the acquisitions of East Asian materials, visited Sichuan University Library, Chengdu in Oct 2008 to learn about the difficulties librarians in the earthquake areas were facing and to explore ways of assisting them. Consequently, together with our University Press and a professor of History, the Libraries gathered 133 boxes of academic books to be distributed to libraries in that region. These 133 boxes of books were delivered to Sichuan in late February 2009 upon which the Sichuan University Libraries would help distribute the books to needy libraries of the earthquake areas (The University of Hong Kong Libraries, 2009).

The Libraries has also established book exchange partnerships with some libraries in Mainland China. Duplicate English textbooks, journals and newspaper clippings are

donated to the Chinese universities and provide the needed English resources that are often still too costly to afford for many Chinese university libraries. A recent success story is the donation of the *Hong Kong Newspaper Clippings* to Peking University Library. The Clippings is a vital source for research on Hong Kong's politics and government from the early 1970's to 1994.

Annual Leadership Institute geared to East Asian Librarians

In 2003, the first *University of Hong Kong Libraries Leadership Institute* was launched. This 4-day residential leadership and management training experience is aimed at providing library directors and senior librarians from the East Asia region with the unique opportunity to develop new skills in the volatile area of innovative management and leadership in the information sector. Eight consecutively successful Institutes have been organized since 2003, in different areas of the region and have drawn more than 350 participants from Hong Kong, mainland China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Macau, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and other countries in the region. Each institute focuses on a different theme, but they are all designed to equip today's leaders with best practices and new ideas about how to overcome the challenges facing them. In addition to a wide range of topics to be covered during the formal sessions, a case study outlining a problem will be given to groups of participants to enable them to work as a team and, using the range of skills learnt during the Institute, develop a viable solution (The University of Hong Kong Libraries, 2003).

To further encourage librarians from financially-underprivileged areas to join the Institute, a number of scholarships are also made available for applicants who require financial assistance. The program has proved to be a cost effective means of accessing the excellent management training services provided by experts in the field from America, Australia, South Africa, Hong Kong and mainland China. Participants find the leadership through learning experience very rewarding, which can be seen from sample evaluations of each Institute:

- I must say that I am very fortunate to be here. It is very stimulating and interesting. I learnt a lot. The chance to interact and share with other leaders is also very rewarding (2003);
- The issues covered were very relevant and will help me very much in my work. I also made many new friends and learnt a lot about libraries in China, HK and Taiwan (2004);
- It's a good career development activity. For mainland librarians it's a pretty new experience in terms of group discussion, case study (2005);

- This Institute inspires me to think about the future of libraries and what we should do to face it (2006);
- The institute is very useful to me. I have learned a lot in terms of professional knowledge, ways in thinking and work attitude. The institute widened my horizon with its rich and advanced content and various interactive activities, especially the group exercise after each section. The case study was the climax of the institute. This kind of activity should be highly recommended (2007);
- Beyond expectations! I think what I get will be relevant for the rest of my career life, even with little updates. A lot of wisdoms and insights (2008)
- It has a great impact in me to develop and improve as a person and as a professional librarian. There will be a lot of changes to be implemented in my institution when I come back to my country (2009);
- Very useful, informative, something that you can value for the rest of your life (2010).

Professional exchanges

A survey (Woo, 2005) shows that staff exchange is one of the key training and development methods used among Mainland China and Hong Kong libraries. For many Mainland Chinese librarians, it is a still privilege to work and learn how things could be done differently in an overseas library. The prohibitive cost becomes an obstacle for them to embark on such a trip. The staff exchange programme provides a cost-effective way for both Chinese and Hong Kong librarians to work together in each other's library settings. The Libraries has developed exchange programmes with a number of university libraries. Librarians from Peking, Tsinghua, Shandong, Fudan and other Mainland universities have come to work in the Libraries for 2 to 4 weeks. They observed and participated in various library operations, meetings and discussions and have acquired genuine insights into the work in the Libraries. Meanwhile, the Libraries also sent our own librarians to these libraries for identical periods of time. Besides the Chinese university libraries, we also have exchange partners in overseas libraries in South Korea and Australia. Such mutual staff exchange programs serve both the purposes of training and development for all participating libraries.

Consultancies

In order to share our expertise and at the same time to allow us to learn more about libraries in Mainland China and other parts of the world, the Deputy University Librarian has been invited to act as a consultant at several libraries dealing with a number of issues. These have included:

- ♦ Reader Services at the Peking University Library: Report of an Investigation (25 October 2004 – 5 November 2004);
- ♦ A Review of the Circulation and Periodicals Departments at Peking University Library (10 October – 16 October 2005);
- ♦ A Review of Branch Libraries Development at Peking University Library (20 November – 27 November 2006).
- ♦ Xiamen University Library Special Collections: Report on a Visit (25 -28 January, 2010).

Visitors

As one of the leading libraries in Asia, the Libraries has attracted thousands of visitors from the local, regional and international communities. The visitors include librarians, school students, government officials, university academics and administrators, associations and societies, etc. Upon request, a library tour is arranged for the visitors. Since 2005, the Libraries has conducted 361 tours and received about 6,500 library visitors (as of March 2010). The organized library visits provide good opportunities to not only promote the visibility and status of the Libraries among the communities, but also arouse the interests of the communities in learning, reading and knowledge creation, and thus contribute to the public participation in the knowledge society.

Partnering with publishers: CLOCKSS

Today's research is increasingly reliant upon electronic resources. In the 2009/2010 fiscal year, 71% of the Libraries' resources fund was allocated to the purchase of electronic resources. However, the dilemma facing worldwide libraries is that the electronic content may disappear anytime from publishers and no longer be accessible to the users. As a result, the libraries may not be able to keep their resources intact for users of future generations.

CLOCKSS (*Controlled Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe*) is a not for profit joint venture between the world's leading scholarly publishers and research libraries whose mission is to build a sustainable, geographically distributed dark archive with which to ensure the long-term survival of Web-based scholarly publications for the benefit of the greater global research community. CLOCKSS ensures the content that becomes no longer available from any publisher is available for free (CLOCKSS, 2008). To support the initiative, HKU Libraries as a participating library, serves as a "node" which allows, when publishers deposit content into CLOCKSS, storage and preservation in "CLOCKSS boxes" at the Libraries. By joining CLOCKSS, the

Libraries, working with other libraries and publishers, is committed to digital preservation for the benefit of global communities.

Discussion and limitations

While the University of Hong Kong Libraries are recognized by the University as an “existing organ of knowledge exchange”, the reality remains that the true emphasis of knowledge exchange within the University lies with the faculties. In particular those faculties who create knowledge in the form of, for example, medical breakthroughs, or feats of engineering and that are seen to have immediate and tangible benefits to society at large. A second, perhaps obvious to many, limitation in our ability to engage the community is our lack of an “open door” policy. Most libraries within government funded higher education institutions throughout the world provide open access to their libraries for at least reading, if not borrowing, purposes. This is, for the most part, not the tradition in Hong Kong. With eight universities funded through the Government’s Universities Grants Committee, only one of those exercises a reasonably liberal access policy for its non-University community. The rationale for closed access is in direct consequence to the dire space situation in most of these libraries. At our own library, especially during peak periods, queues of up to several hundred students await the morning opening and tempers fray when students “hold” seats and no other seating becomes available. Despite these spatial limitations our lack of an open door policy has often raised criticism among the community.

While we have regionally led the way with our institutional repository and we have extended its purpose beyond a mere archive to a tool for managing institutional reputation, we continue to endure only limited success in its fuller implementation. Like other institutions across the world we experience: limited faculty uptake; some faculty opposition; library staff must pursue faculty for their publications; library staff undertake all archiving (i.e. no self-archiving by faculty). The resulting outcome is that a great deal of library staff time must be dedicated to discovering faculty publications, establishing publisher policies for these publications, creating metadata and so on.

Our earlier discussion about the Circle of Friends, and alumni members ability to access selected electronic resources has brought us under considerable criticism. While we have negotiated licences to enable access to a limited number of resources, these users constantly challenge us to provide even greater (comprehensive) access. Unfortunately, and despite our constant explanations that our licences do not extend to cover these categories of users, we continue to receive these criticisms.

Our book talks were an instant success and spawned other similar functions in Hong Kong. Hong Kong however is a small, yet culturally rich, region and it might be asked whether such a small place can sustain numerous events of this nature. The Libraries' book talks have been enormously successful in terms of stimulating discussion as well as generating an amount of goodwill. That being said, some of the book talks see only a very small attendance, yet each of them costs about the same to hold. The question might be asked, does the library receive value for money from its book talks in terms of (i) community engagement; (ii) good will generated, and; (iii) stimulating interest in the library among the broader community.

Conclusion and the Future

The Libraries at the University of Hong Kong have long been at the forefront of knowledge exchange and contributing to the broad community through an array of initiatives, services and special arrangements. This has been occurring long before the current interest in knowledge transfer has become so widespread and rewarded. As an institution whose majority of funding comes from the public purse, we believe, despite the limitations we have previously identified, that it is an obligation we have to continue to contribute wherever and whenever and however we can to the broader community, locally, regionally and globally. As the University embarks on its centennial celebration and a new four year curriculum is introduced meaning that the student intake will increase by one-third, additional strains on the Libraries will be experienced. Yet, while we may be restricted in some ways as to how we can continue to contribute to the broader community, our resolve remains steady as we will continue to challenge ourselves to find new and innovative means of contributing to a better society.

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