



The University of Hong Kong  
School of English and the Faculty of Arts

## Where Are We Now?

A Symposium on Postcolonial Collections and Archives

4-6 June 2009



# CONTENT

Conference Programme .....	2
Abstracts .....	6
General Information .....	13
Campus Map .....	14
Notes .....	16

## **Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> June** (Room 113G, Main Building)

### **2-2:20pm: Introductions**

**Kam Louie**, Dean of the Faculty of Arts (HKU)

**Q.S. Tong**, Head of the School of English (HKU)

### **2:30-4pm: Reconfiguring Postcolonial Archives and Collections**

Chair: **Chris Hutton** (HKU)

**Otto Heim** (HKU)

**The Cross-Cultural Confluence of Museum and Theater in Victoria  
Kneubuhl's Hawaiian Plays**

**Robert Sullivan** (University of Hawai'i)

**Toward a Maori Memory Institution: Digital Manifestations of a Dream**

### **4:15-5:45pm: Words, Images and Issues of Access**

Chair: **Alexandra Green** (HKU)

**Donette Francis** (SUNY Binghamton)

**Translating Archives of Intimacy**

**Clare Harris** (University of Oxford/Pitt-Rivers Museum)

**The Imperial Archive and its Avatars**

## **Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June (Room 113G, Main Building)**

### **10:30-12 midday: Looking for Women in Colonial Archives**

Chair: **Julia Kuehn** (HKU)

**Patricia Pok-Kwan Chiu** (University of Cambridge)

**A Postcolonial Reading of the History of Girls' Education in Hong Kong: Reflections on the Archives of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Society for Promoting Female Education in the East (FES)**

**Marie-Paule Ha** (HKU)

**Women in the Colonial Archives**

### **12-1pm: Lunch served outside the Seminar Room**

### **1pm-2:30pm: Art Collections and Archives in Postcolonial Hong Kong**

Chair: **Yeewan Koon** (HKU)

**Tina Pang** (HKU)

**Private Collections Becoming Public**

**Phoebe Wong** (Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong)

**Archiving Asia in a Globalized Art World**

## **Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June (Room 113G, Main Building)**

### **2:45-4:15pm: Locating the Archive**

Chair: **Elaine Ho** (HKU)

**Madhumita Lahiri** (Duke University)

**The Post-National Archive: Books, Movies, Google, and Me**

**Patrice Nganang** (SUNY Stony Brook)

**The Oceanic Principle: Reading Walcott's 'Omeros'**

### **4:30-5:30pm: Roundtable Discussion (Closed Session)**

Chair: **Katherine Baxter** (HKU)

**6pm: Symposium Gala Dinner**

## **Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> June** (Room 113G, Main Building)

**10-12midday: Where Are We Now? – Hong Kong Archives**

Chair: **Douglas Kerr** (HKU)

**Simon Chu** (Chinese University of Hong Kong; Former Director of the Hong Kong Government Records Service)

**Collective Memory or Collective Loss of Memory: Post-1997 Archival Policy of the Hong Kong SAR Government**

**Peter Cunich** (HKU)

**The (Post)colonial University Archive and its Uses**

**Stacy Belcher-Gould** (HKU)

**An American Archivist's Experience in Hong Kong**

## Abstracts

**Otto Heim** (HKU)

### **The Cross-Cultural Confluence of Museum and Theater in Victoria Kneubuhl's Hawaiian Plays**

In this paper I will explore the significance of Hawaiian playwright Victoria Kneubuhl's interfacing of museum and theater in the context of postcolonial challenges to museum conventions. Such challenges have in a more general sense foregrounded performative or 'theatrical' aspects of museum practices, be it in the form of recognition of non-European traditions of curatorship and memorial display, in more or less entertaining forms of community engagement by contemporary museums, or in the engagement with a Western history of activities of collecting and displaying. In this confluence of museum and theater, cultural traditions can join and seemingly forgotten practices surface, around notions of play, memory, and the symbolic drawing and crossing of boundaries. As such, the interfacing of museum and theater accentuates what, following Victor Turner, we could call their liminoid character, favoring the creative release and recombination of institutionally controlled meanings. Time permitting, I will concretize these observations with reference to Kneubuhl's three plays, *The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu*, *Emmalehua*, and *Ola nā Iwi (The Bones Live)*.



**Robert Sullivan** (University of Hawai'i)

### **Toward a Maori Memory Institution: Digital Manifestations of a Dream**

This paper sketches a next stage of Maori information services, toward a Maori memory institution that reunites the various strands of Maori knowledge first preserved but also divided among various institutions during the colonization of New Zealand, a Maori institution that combines aspects of the museum, archive, library and business information center.



**Donette Francis** (SUNY Binghamton)

### **Translating Archives of Intimacy**

Michel-Rolph Trouillot argues that maneuvers of active silencing occur at the making of sources, archives, narratives and ultimately, history. This paper reads the Navy archives of the American Occupation of the Dominican Republic from 1914-1924 to question the linguistic politics embedded in the making of military archives. Housed in Washington D.C., the Marines' archives have three volumes of the Executive Orders instated

by the U.S. military government during its occupation of the republic. While most of these orders are translated into English, curiously Executive Order 168—which specifically enacted laws about paternity, marriage and prostitution—is not, and remains only available in Spanish. Researchers therefore have to rely on their own knowledge of Spanish and translation skills. This process of translation compels the following questions: why were the laws specifically governing intimacy not made readily available through translation? Was this act of non-translation an active act of silencing those precise U.S. regulations around intimacy? Throughout, I consider what translating archives of intimacy reveal about the process of archive making and the colonial project in various global theatres.



**Clare Harris** (University of Oxford/Pitt-Rivers Museum)  
**The Imperial Archive and its Avatars**

In the last decade, museums and other archival institutions have begun to convert their tangible collections into digital objects that circulate on the worldwide web and can be accessed by anyone, anywhere and at any time. This democratisation is a welcome development but it raises all kinds of questions including: Is curatorial authority and ownership truly relinquished in the virtual “contact zone” (Clifford) of the Web? Are digital archives always positively received within various interpretive communities? In what ways is the archive/collection itself reconfigured in this process? What is lost or erased along the way?

When images are free to roam in the virtual space of the internet they risk becoming floating signifiers detached from all kinds of contextualising information, particularly concerning how they were created: when, where and why. Often such information is embedded in the materiality of the original object and/or its archival record: information that may reveal the ‘truth value’ of the object but which may be expunged in its digital avatar. These are particularly pertinent issues when the digital objects are derived from historic photographs created during colonialism. This paper considers the case of photographs of Tibet made by representatives of the British Empire that have recently been transferred from the actual/tangible archive into the virtual sphere. It examines their reception in various locations and their deployment as visual evidence within competing colonialisms. For the Imperial Archive has many avatars in which the history of Tibet is contested and images from the past are enlisted in the service of opposing sides.





**Patricia Pok-kwan Chiu** (University of Cambridge)

## **A Postcolonial Reading of the History of Girls' Education in Hong Kong: Reflections on the Archives of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Society for Promoting Female Education in the East (FES)**

In nineteenth-century Hong Kong the education of boys was a shared concern between the government, missionary societies and Chinese charities. Yet the provision of education for girls was predominantly the initiative of European women missionaries and nuns until the establishment of the government Central School for Girls in 1890. Situated in secluded neighbourhoods and run as a combination of 'home' and boarding school with branch day schools established nearer town, these mission schools were archives of evidence recording the lives of girls and women in the colonial past. They were an intersection of the domestic sphere of home and the public world of teaching and 'school-keeping' for the European and Chinese women educators, and were sites where disparate cultural practices, ideals of femininity and domesticity were encountered and negotiated. Whilst local reports of the Inspector of Schools had recorded statistical data and appraisals of academic performance, the personal, social and political aspects of girls' education could only be explored through fragmentary evidence housed in the archives of missionary societies overseas.

Since the first decade of colonial rule, three British missionary societies, namely, the London Missionary Society (LMS), Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Society for Promoting Female Education in the East (FES) had been actively involved in girls' education in Hong Kong. By 1899, the year when FES closed down and handed over the schools to CMS, about 40% of girls attending schools under government inspection were educated under the three societies.

This paper will briefly introduce the multi-faceted accounts of girls' education in pre-war Hong Kong recorded in the postcolonial archives of FES and CMS kept in the UK, discuss the relation between the two, and identify the gaps and silences. I shall further explore in what ways a postcolonial reading of these archives reveals the complexities of the politics of ideologies, identities and subjectivities in shaping the development of girls' education in colonial Hong Kong.



## Marie-Paule Ha (HKU) Women in the Colonial Archives

Writing about the history of women in the 19th century, the French historian Alain Corbin remarks: "Women's history is like an echo, perceived with the help of a whole range of male data, despite the efforts of historians (both male and female) to seek out women's words more directly, Almost all the documents in the public archives were written by men in positions of responsibilities."<sup>1</sup> Such is certainly the case of French colonial history, which until recently has been dominated by an almost exclusively male cast. In this paper, I discuss some of the challenges I encounter in my own research on the lives of French women in Indochina in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. One major issue has to do with the politics of selecting and cataloguing sources in the archives, which is heavily gender and class inflected. The second challenge lies in the reading and interpretation of the archival sources on and by women.



## Tina Pang (HKU) Private Collections Becoming Public

This paper will examine the role of private collectors in shaping public collections in Hong Kong. Given the relative youth and immaturity of the museum profession in Hong Kong, private individuals have played a disproportionately influential role in the development of public collections. By examining the process by which two collections have made the transition from the private to the public sphere, this paper will reveal how personal, civic and national interests can converge.



## Phoebe Wong (Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong) Archiving Asia in a Globalized Art World

With the rise of globalization, global art has been emerging as a contemporary phenomenon since the 1990s and gradually replacing the notion of world art which connotes "a disputed heritage of the colonial past" for its Eurocentric nature and universal claims.

Asia Art Archive (AAA), an art institution with an archive interface, was initiated in 2000 as a direct response to the increasing number of Asian contemporary art exhibitions and events regionally and worldwide. Based in Hong Kong, AAA is dedicated to documenting the recent history of visual art from the region within an international context.

This paper examines the work of Asia Art Archive, as an independent cultural agent, in (re-)framing the histories of art in Asia, and perhaps Asia

<sup>1</sup> Alain Corbin, "A Sex in Mourning": The History of Women in the Nineteenth Century" in *Writing Women's History*, ed. Michelle Perrot (Oxford, 1992), pp.106-117, 106.

itself, in the age of digital culture which is a major force in shaping and defining globalization.



**Madhumita Lahiri** (Duke University)

### **The Post-National Archive: Books, Movies, Google, and Me**

Is the archive always the archive of a nation? Despite the global nature of colonialism and imperialism, the postcolonial archive is rarely global in its ambitions. This nation-based organization has serious consequences for the kinds of projects developed in colonial and postcolonial studies, perpetuating the illusion of the nation as a rubric of immediate relevance and obscuring anti-colonial projects that were not national in their aspirations. I interrogate the possibility of a post-national post-colonial archive, contrasting the more international practices of film studies and collections with the national preoccupations of most text-centered approaches.



**Patrice Nganang** (SUNY Stony Brook)

### **The Oceanic Principle: Reading Walcott's 'Omeros'**

On page 171 of his summa poetica, *Omeros*, the Caribbean poet Derek Walcott writes 'but castaways make friends with the sea', thus appropriating one of the oldest, and most paradoxical contentions of maritime history: the sea as necessary outlet of territorial power, but also the sea as constituent thereof; the sea therefore, as constituent of empire. In this paper, I intend to take Walcott's poem as the starting point of an analysis of that paradox, which I will elaborate around a contrastive analysis of 'sea power' on the one hand, a concept first formulated theoretically by American maritime historian Alfred Mahan, in his very influential *Influence of Sea Power upon History* (1890), and of 'the superfluous man' on the other, whose very existence, according to Hannah Arendt in *The origins of Totalitarianism* (1950), is at the root of colonial culture and its aftermath. My intention is to see how Mahan and Arendt illuminate, not only Walcott's poetical conception and re-appropriation of 'History' for the 'Seashells' (p.30), but map out some foundational principles of a historiography which is located beyond colonialism, and at the same time takes the sea seriously.



**Simon Chu** (Chinese University of Hong Kong; Former Director of the Hong Kong Government Records Service)

### **Collective Memory or Collective Loss of Memory: Post-1997 Archival Policy of the Hong Kong SAR Government**

Lots have been said about the value of records and archives for society. Records of the government are evidence of its activities, transaction and deliberation. Proper management and preservation of records are prerequisites for good governance and the basis for accountability. They are also an important part of the collective memory to the community. Most countries or territories in the world have enacted "Archives Laws" to make sure that public servants take records seriously and follow rules and best practices in managing and preserving records as these governments have learnt painful but valuable lessons from their experiences that without the archives law, records and archives will not survive.

But, as far as Hong Kong SAR Government is concerned, archival legislation is not needed, even though the government had as early as in 1972 agreed that the law should be and would be introduced. The Government repeatedly claims that its current system and practices in records and archival management are effective enough.

This paper examines and exposes the current lamentable state of affair in records and archives management in the SAR Government and warns that if such a situation is allowed to "thrive" unchecked, records and archives of our society will be decimated sooner than expected; Hong Kong will then become a society without memory, without history and without culture. Good governance and accountability are merely empty talks.



**Peter Cunich** (HKU)

### **The (Post)colonial University Archive and its Uses**

Educational historians and other scholars with an interest in comparative education have not yet fully assessed the impact of the British Empire on the development of higher education in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Tellingly, higher education hardly rates a mention in the recent four-volume *Oxford History of the British Empire*, nor has this topic earned a supplementary volume in the way that issues such as the Irish, missionaries, gender, and the black experience of empire have been accorded special treatment within the imperial theme. Yet it might be argued that within the wider British imperial impulse to support colonial education schemes, the founding of institutions of higher education throughout the Empire was to have perhaps the greatest impact, both politically and socially. While much of the history of "British" higher education has so far been written from a metropolitan point of view, many "colonial" or post-colonial institutions of higher education have recognized their own significance in the story of national awakening and have therefore been engaged in writing their

own histories. This has often required the building of archives before the story can be written. This paper will examine the way in which three post-colonial universities (the University of Sydney, the National University of Singapore and the University of Hong Kong) have set about this process and how the act of creating an archive post-colonially has influenced the story of the past which is ultimately written.



**Stacy Belcher-Gould (HKU)**  
**An American Archivist's Experience in Hong Kong**

The paper addresses the speaker's experiences here at the University of Hong Kong from two different perspectives. The first perspective considers the challenge of building an institutional Archive from scratch and the second perspective looks at how this is accomplished within the particular archival framework (or lack thereof) of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. The special status of Hong Kong, past and present, as explained by her colleague Professor Simon Chu, has created a particular archival atmosphere which is unique to Hong Kong and which presents both difficulties and great opportunities. This, in turn, has informed the University's past practices and continues to influence the growth of the archival and records management program here, as Professor Peter Cunich has mentioned in his assessment of three Asian University Archives.



## General Information

### Banking

A small **HSBC** branch is located on the Main Campus (G/F, Run Run Shaw Building). There is an ATM machine, but only limited facilities for changing foreign currency.

### Catering

Morning and afternoon coffee are open to all who attend the conference. Lunch will be served for conference speakers outside Room 113G, Main Building, on Friday 5 June 2009.

### Conference Dinner

Conference dinner for speakers and chairs will be held at **Bi Yi Restaurant** (巴依餐廳) at 6:00pm.

Address: 43 Water Street, Sai Ying Pun, Hong Kong  
地址: 香港西營盤水街43號地下

### Internet access & email

During the period of the conference, you may use the Main Library facilities for checking email, internet access, etc. by presenting your conference name tag at the counter. Simply type in the temporary user name and password printed behind your name tag (included in the conference pack), and you will be able to log into any computer in the library.

### Robert Black College

Conference speakers from overseas will be staying at the Robert Black College 香港大學柏立基學院. The College is located on the University Campus. There are many routes of buses and mini-buses connecting the College to Central and other districts of Hong Kong. A taxi ride from the city centre takes about fifteen minutes.

Phone: (852) 2296 1771  
Address: University Drive, Hong Kong  
地址: 香港大學道

### Contact Numbers

During the duration of the conference, if you have any questions, please feel free to call the following numbers:

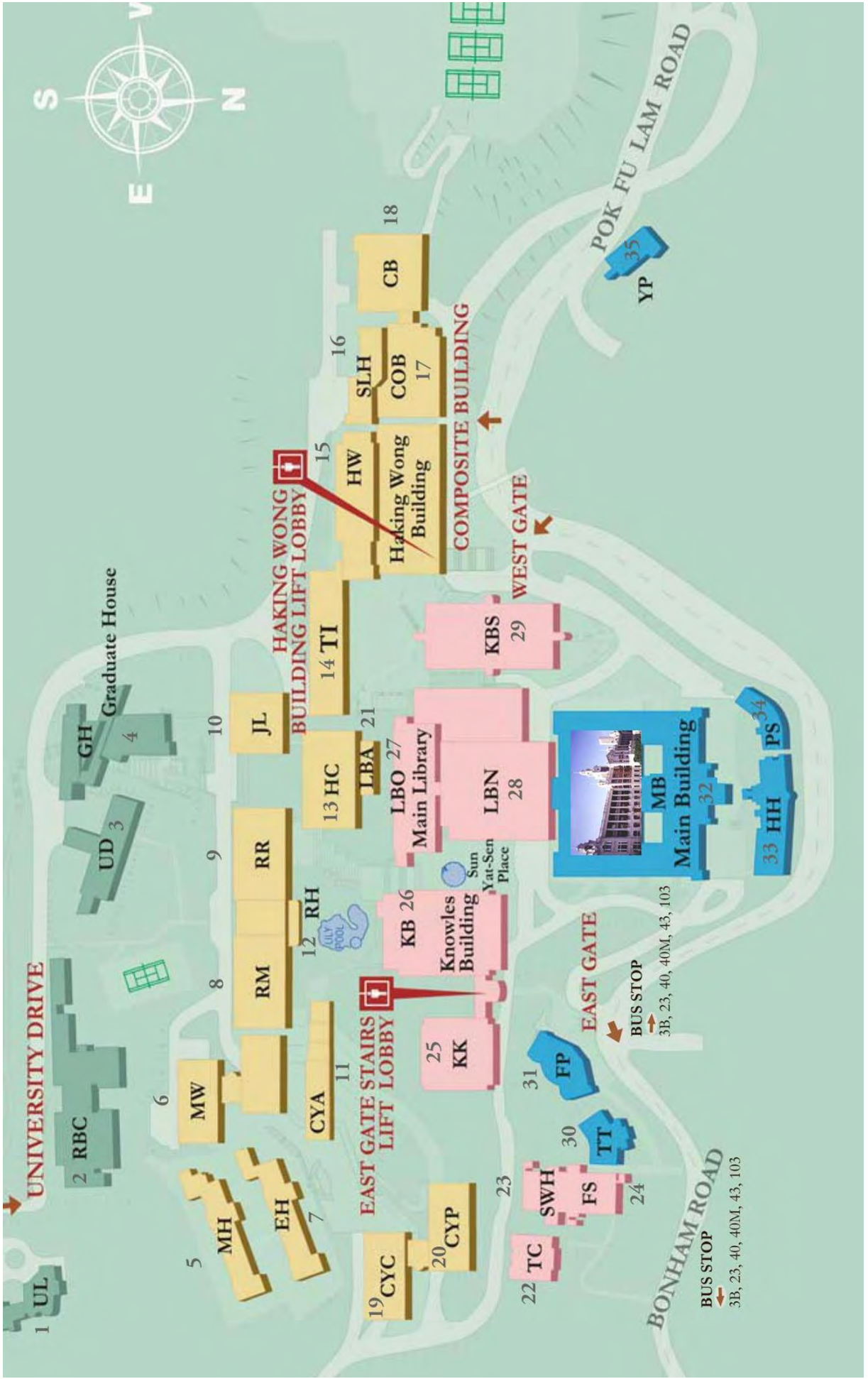
**Katherine Baxter:** 6380 2709

**Mary Lo:** 9806 6273

**School of English Office:** 2859 2749 or 2859 2755



# Campus Map



- [01]  UL - University Lodge
- [02] RBC - **Robert Black College**
- [03] UD - University Drive No.2
- [04] GH - **Graduate House (Joseph at the Graduate Restaurant)**
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- [05]  MH - May Hall
- [06] MW - Meng Wah Complex Building
- [07] EH - Eliot Hall
- [08] RM - Runme Shaw Building
- [09] RR - Run Run Shaw Building
- [10] JL - James Hsioung Lee Science Building
- [11] CYA - Chong Yuet Ming Amenities Centre
- [12] RH - Rayson Huang Theatre
- [13] HC - Hui Oi Chow Science Building
- [14] TI - Technology Innovation and Incubation Building
- [15] HW - Haking Wong Building
- [16] SLH - Simon K.Y. Lee Hall
- [17] COB - Composite Building
- [18] CB - Chow Yei Ching Building
- [19] CYC - Chong Yuet Ming Chemistry Building
- [20] CYP - Chong Yuet Ming Physics Building
- [21] LBA - Library Annex
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- [22]  TC - Tang Chi Ngong Building
- [23] SWH - Swire Hall
- [24] FS - Fong Shu Chuen Amenities Centre
- [25] KK - **K.K. Leung Building (Senior Common Room)**
- [26] KB - Knowles Building
- [27] LBO Main - Library Building (Old Wing)
- [28] LBN - **Library Building (New Wing)**
- [29] KBS - Kadoorie Biological Sciences Building
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- [30]  TT - T.T. Tsui Building
- [31] FP - Fung Ping Shan Building
- [32] MB - **Main Building (Convocation Room)**
- [33] HH - Hung Hing Ying Building
- [34] PS - Pao Siu Loong Building
- [35] YP - Yam Pak Building



# Notes

Blank lined paper with horizontal lines and small circular markers for note-taking.