

Professor Liao Ping-hui Lectures on “Taiwan’s Digital Archives”

In 2013, the National Central Library (NCL) and various prominent United States universities jointly sponsored the Taiwan Lectures on Chinese Studies to establish an exchange platform for showcasing research results from the field of Taiwan Studies and Sinology, and to enhance awareness of Chinese culture with Taiwan characteristics. On October 11, the NCL and the University of Washington’s East Asia Library collaborated to invite Professor Liao Ping-hui, chair holder of the Chuan Lyu Endowed Chair in Taiwan Studies at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), to deliver a lecture on “Taiwan’s Digital Archives.” The talk, given at UW’s Odegaard Undergraduate Library, was introduced by the Director and China Studies Librarian of UW’s East Asia Library, Zhijia Shen. The Director General of the Taiwan Economic and Cultural Office in Seattle, Andy Chin, also spoke at the event.

Professor Liao received his Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from UCSD and returned to his alma mater to become the first chair holder after serving as a foreign language instructor at National Tsing Hua University in Hsinchu, Taiwan. His academic specialties are post-colonial theory, gender and film, and cultural theory. A prominent international scholar, he once headed the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences of Taiwan’s National Science Council, so he is very familiar with the process by which academia in Taiwan is digitizing.

Professor Liao’s talk primarily introduced the active implementation by Taiwan in recent years of the Taiwan E-Learning & Digital Archives Program whereby, under the auspices of the National Science Council, Executive Yuan, Academia Sinica, National Taiwan University, the National Palace Museum, and the National Central Library have been setting up digital archives in various categories, including reference tools, antiquarian books, government files, history and geography, language and literature, religion and society, art and culture, and Taiwan studies. Rich and diverse in content, they are extremely helpful to research. These digitizing projects also involve international cooperation; however, since they are mostly Chinese-language materials and lack a

commercial platform, they cannot be disseminated and used internationally, so this should be the next goal of effort. At the end of his talk, Professor Liao cited the Taiwan History Digital Library and the Taiwan Colonial Court Records Archives as examples, describing in detail how to use these archives to conduct research and to be able to generate new observations and discoveries.

Professor Liao meticulously described the characteristics and web addresses of various major archives and was able to impartially point out the strengths and weak points of digital developments in Taiwan. What was most spectacular was that he gave examples from the perspective of a researcher on how to precisely use such archives to achieve major research breakthroughs. This proved very enlightening to UW students, faculty and library staff.

After the lecture, Center for Chinese Studies (CCS) Academic Exchange Section Chief Geng Li-chun played an English-language video, “Resources for Chinese Studies in Taiwan,” introducing Taiwan’s Sinology research resources specially produced for the Taiwan Lectures on Chinese Studies. As a perfect complement to Professor Liao’s lecture, the video offered a briefing on the services provided by the CCS, research grants for foreign scholars in Taiwan and Chinese studies, and the setting up by various academic institutions of Sinological e-resources to encourage greater numbers of outstanding foreign scholars to apply for grants to conduct research in Taiwan.



Professor Liao Ping-hui lecturing at the University of Washington on
“Taiwan’s Digital Archives”



Professor Liao Ping-hui



Group photo of lecturer Professor Liao Ping-hui (5th from Left); Taiwan Economic and Cultural Office in Seattle Director General Andy Chin (4th from Left); and lecture series staff (3rd from Left, Center for Chinese Studies Academic Exchange Section Chief Geng Li-Chun; 4th from Right, East Asia Library Director Zhijia Shen)