

Prof. Kai Wing-chow Delivers a Lecture on the History of Traditional Chinese Books at UIUC

On October 14, 2017, Taiwan's National Central Library (NCL) and the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign (UIUC) signed a collaborative agreement to establish a Taiwan Resource Center for Chinese Studies (TRCCS) at the university. A Taiwan Lecture on Chinese Studies, and the opening ceremony for the Fascinating Culture of Books exhibition were held the same day. A delegation of directors and staff from the NCL, led by Director-General Tseng Shu-hsien, participated in this important occasion. Mr. Robert Chang, Director of the Taipei Educational and Cultural Office in Chicago, also attended to lend his support.

UIUC is one of the top public universities in the U.S., frequently ranking in the top 50 universities internationally. The UIUC library's collection of more than 14 million volumes is the largest collection held by a public university in the world. The establishment of a TRCCS at the library will have a deep and lasting positive influence on the promotion of Taiwan and Chinese studies, and on collaborations with major Midwestern universities and research institutions.

The Taiwan Lecture on Chinese Studies commenced after the TRCCS name plaque had been formally unveiled. The theme chosen for the lecture was the history of books, to accompany the opening of the NCL's Fascinating Culture of Books exhibition at the university. UIUC Professor Kai-wing Chow (周啟榮) was invited to deliver the lecture, entitled "Printing Technology, Book Culture, and the World of Print in Imperial China."

Prof. Chow is a professor of East Asian Studies, History, and Medieval Studies. His main field of research encompasses the history of Chinese thought and culture during the Ming and Qing dynasties, including printing technology, identity politics, and public culture. In his lecture, Prof. Chow remarked that, due to the ease of use of its technology, China's woodblock and moveable type printing not only advanced the transmission of printing technology around traditional China and the outside world, but

also shaped a rich and varied print culture in China, Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. In China, where it had originated, it helped form a society that widely used printed matter in every important aspect of life, as well as a unique book culture.

It is worth mentioning that the UIUC library, the venue for this lecture, has many classical and ancient Chinese books in its collection. Among these are a 1716 block printed edition of the *Kangxi cidian* (康熙字典); a 1735 illustrated edition of *Xiuxiang di qi caizi shu* (繡像第七才子書); and Ming dynasty first editions of *Gushan bichen* (谷山筆塵), *Xijing zaji* (西京雜記) and *Youyang zazu* (酉陽雜俎). The library also houses the private collection of manuscripts and authoritative editions that once belonged to Harvard-Yenching Library's founding Librarian, Dr. Alfred Kai-ming Chiu.

At the end of the lecture, the audience stayed on to witness the opening ceremony for the Fascinating Culture of Books, an exhibition hosted by the NCL, whose staff led them on a guided tour. The exhibition, which ran from November 14 to December 31, 2017, featured many rarely seen ancient editions. There was also a special opportunity for exhibition visitors to print their own traditional auspicious messages and pictures of the God of Wealth to mark the New Year.



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