

Report: Internship at Chinese University of Hong Kong Library

August 17 to September 4, 2015

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Introduction

Choosing the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) Library as a preferential location for my internship was based on the following considerations: I have always been interested in learning how the collaboration between a University Library and faculty members as well as students works in practice, since the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (Berlin State Library), where I get my professional training as a librarian, is a universal research library that is not embedded in a university. With an educational background in Chinese Studies I have been particularly interested in the special challenges contemporary libraries in Greater China are confronted with.

Furthermore CUHK has many Chinese studies programmes and the library therefore contains an extensive Chinese and Hong Kong collection. Finally, I was very impressed by the strong focus on learning and research support with various learning and research spaces adapted to the users' manifold needs.

During my internship I had the chance to visit the branch libraries and most of the library's departments; however the focus was on the library's liaison work with faculties and learning support. I was invited to attend several meetings such as the Professional Staff Team meeting, the Faculty Liaison Team meeting, and the Digital Initiatives Group meeting.

I would like to thank the CUHK University Librarian, Louise Jones, and her team for giving me the chance to get a deep insight into the various departments and the work of the library. I am particularly grateful to Louise Jones, Maria Lau, Dominic Chan, and Ann Chiu for their warm welcome and constant support during my stay at CUHK Library.

The internship was generously supported by a travel grant from BI-International.

Libraries in Hong Kong and the JULAC consortium

The CUHK is one of eight universities governmentally funded by the University Grants Committee (UGC). Additionally, Hong Kong has several self-funded and public institutions. The University Libraries of the eight governmentally funded institutions cooperate in a forum called Joint University Librarians Advisory Committee (JULAC) in order to coordinate and collaborate with regard to library information resources and services. Together they provide a series of resources

and services to the members of these institutions, for example a special library card (JULAC card) for faculty members and postgraduate students to have access to all eight libraries, the Hong Kong Academic Library Link (HKALL), which is a union catalogue of all eight OPACs, an inter library loan system among the JULAC libraries. JULAC furthermore participates in consortial purchase and provision of electronic materials as e-books and databases.

History of CUHK Library

The CUHK is the second oldest institution of higher learning in Hong Kong. It was established in 1963 as a federation of three Colleges: the New Asia College, the Chung Chi College, and the United College. These colleges were formed in the tumultuous years after 1949 with the goal to provide post-secondary education to the rising population of Hong Kong. Today, the university has nine colleges. The college system is till date not only a unique element of CUHK among the universities in Hong Kong, it is also highly relevant for the CUHK Library.

At the time the University Library was founded, the three founding colleges already had their own libraries – and still have libraries today. These libraries were integrated into the CUHK Library as branch libraries, however the identification and connection with the colleges is still very strong.

The CUHK Library combines the University Library with six branch libraries, that is, the three college libraries of the founding colleges and three subject libraries:

- The Chung Chi College Elisabeth Luce Moore Library at the lower campus houses collections on music, religion, education, sports science, Japanese literature and language, performing arts and theatre.
- The New Asia College Ch'ien Mu Library at the upper campus holds collections on Chinese language and literature, and fine arts.
- The United College Wu Chung Multimedia Library at the upper campus holds the primary collection of audio-visual materials from all subjects and the philosophy collection.
- The Architecture Library at the lower campus supports the teaching and research of the School of Architecture
- The Lee Quo Wei Law Library supports the Law Faculty. This is the newest of the subject libraries and is housed in the Tin Ka Ping Building of the University Library.
- The Li Ping Medical Library supports teaching, learning and research needs of the Faculty of Medicine. It is located outside of the campus in Shatin at the Prince of Wales Hospital, the teaching hospital of the Faculty of Medicine.

During my stay at CUHK I had the chance to visit all these libraries, with the exception of the medical library outside of the campus, however I got an introduction to this branch library's services and collection as well. Each of the branch libraries is responsible for one or several subjects areas of the whole collection. They are all part of the CUHK Library and managed by the

University Library, however the responsibility for the three subject libraries architecture, law and medicine lies with the respective faculty. This is quite important for the liaison work of the library; I will get back to this point later.

The libraries of the upper campus at New Asia and United College are envisaged as a combined humanities centre in the future. The New Asia library already underwent a major renovation this summer and reopened just in time for the beginning of the winter term. Because space was limited, a part of the collection – the philosophy section – was moved to the United College Library. The renovation of the United College Library is planned the near future. In this context the Multimedia Library's concept will be adapted to the user's new requirements as well.

The University Library's buildings and reading rooms

The University Library has three buildings, the old building which was built in the 1960s, a first extension at the back of the library, the Tin Ka Ping Building, and the new Library Extension on the left hand side of the old library building, which was opened in 2012. All three buildings are interconnected and function as one library complex. It is remarkable how the architects merged these three buildings, with intended stylistic inconsistencies in the architecture. Channels allow daylight to pass into the reading rooms and passages connect the different buildings.

The library provides many different facilities and spaces for learning and research that are adapted to the heterogeneous requirements of its users. There are different kinds of study rooms for group sessions, multi-purpose rooms, presentation rooms, teaching rooms, and study rooms for doctoral students and faculties, which can be booked through the Library Room Booking System.

One of the special learning spaces is the Learning Garden in the basement of the new Library Extension, coordinated by the Learning Support team and open around the clock during the semester. It was specially designed to accommodate the needs of the undergraduate students by providing a technology-rich as well as flexible and inspiring environment. The goal is to make students feel comfortable in this learning environment. A snake-like table – the Learning Path – winds through the room, with lower parts for sitting on cushions on the ground and higher parts for sitting on elevated chairs. There are study rooms for smaller groups – called Bubble Group Study Rooms because of their shape – and places to rest comfortably or read a book. There is a multimedia zone which provides the option to use 3D-scanners and printers. White Boards – multi-media and traditional – are provided, however the traditional ones are preferred by the students. They became a site for communication and discussion, students even started to write poems on the boards. Inspired by the poems on the whiteboard, a group of institutions started a

project called “The Power of Words” to encourage reading and writing poems; on the whole campus they display poems on blackboards, windows, etc.¹

The architectural highlight of the Learning Garden is its location under the pond in front of the library entrance. Daylight passes into the room through the water of the pond with the glass ceiling of the room creating a fascinating illumination. Since the library feared users to be disturbed by the flickering light, a mechanism was installed to shut out the daylight, however until now no complaints were reported and it has not been employed.

Another highlight is the passage from the modern and bright learning garden to a quiet reading area with traditional book shelves and dark furniture, without any barriers, only indicated by the different floor coverings. The architect juxtaposes two very different concepts in the library, on the one side the very modern library of the future and on the other side the traditional library.

Organisational Structure of CUHK Library

The library has seven departments:²

- Library Administrative Services
- Library IT & Services
- Technical Services
- User Services
- Learning Support
- Research Support & Digital Initiatives
- Special Collections

Although I had the chance to visit most of the departments during my stay at CUHK Library, in this report I will focus on three of the departments: The Research Support and Digital Initiatives as well as Special Collections in this section and Learning Support in the next section.

The library underwent some major restructurings in the last two years. Very recently the Reference Services was split up into two new departments: Learning Support and Research Support and Digital Initiatives (RSDI). During the first days of my internship I have seen how parts of the reorganisation came into effect with staff moving offices and taking on new responsibilities. The former department is mainly responsible for the support of undergraduate students by providing learning spaces as well as assisting them with teaching and learning activities. The Learning Support team gives library orientation tours in the beginning of the winter terms, teaches information literacy classes and workshops, and provides guides and tutorials, etc. The latter department is mainly responsible for the support of postgraduate students and faculties with regard to their research activities. The RSDI team provides workshops and seminars particularly

¹ The institutions are: The Independent Learning Centre, Hong Kong Literature Research Centre, Office of the Arts Administrator and Tolopoem. <http://www.iso.cuhk.edu.hk/english/publications/newsletter/article.aspx?articleid=56473> (accessed Sept. 21, 2015)

² <http://www.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/sites/cuhk/files/page/about/people/people-organisation-chart.pdf> (accessed Sept. 21, 2015)

designed for the needs of postgraduate students and faculties and helps with copyright issues, citation management, etc.

At the moment the RSDI team tests various formats, such as the Research Café where postgraduates and researchers are invited to present research projects and exchange ideas across disciplines in order to increase cross-disciplinary cooperation. Furthermore, they are building up a Research Consultation Service and a Digital Scholarship Service with the aim of supporting research activities across the entire research life cycle from starting a research project to disseminating research outputs with up-to-date digital technologies.

During my stay at the CUHK Library I had the chance to attend two meetings of the RSDI team: In one meeting team members presented their impressions from a visit at the Brown University Digital Scholarship Service and their ideas for a Digital Scholarship Lab at CUHK Library. In the Digital Initiatives Group meeting members discussed the current progress of a project with the aim to launch a digital repository. They chose to work with the open source digital repository system Islandora. For me as an observer it was very interesting to see how dynamic and creative the group worked together to plan which collections might be introduced into this repository and how they could be organised and presented in the repository's front end.

Currently, the strategic goal of the Digital Initiatives Group and the Special Collections Department is to make the different collections more visible for researchers and to make them easily accessible, either in the library via a Special Collections Reading Room or open access via the institutional repository, if the materials are in the public domain. The library holds collections

- relating to the region and the people, such as Hong Kong Literature – a collection built on the initiative of authors and researchers from the discipline –, Hong Kong studies, Hong Kong Government Documents – CUHK Library and University of Hong Kong Library both are deposit libraries for government publications –, or the Chinese Overseas Collection,
- relating to different periods in time, such as rare books (until the end of the 18th century), semi-rare books (1796-1911), books from the Republican period (Minguo collection, 1912-1949), and from the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976),
- with archival and printed materials on and by individual persons, such as the literate and Nobel laureate Gao Xingjian, the American ethnomusicologist Rulan Chao Pian, or materials on Chinese literature and religion, prepared and collected by the sinologist David Hawkes.³

The Special Collections team aspires to make these materials more visible, particularly the manuscripts and archival materials which in many cases are not yet included in catalogues or databases. For materials which cannot be made openly accessible in the repository, the team

³ <http://www.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/en/collections/spc> (accessed Sept. 21, 2015)

aims at making the relevant metadata available in an archives information management system; CUHK Library chose the web-based system ArchivesSpace.

Faculty Liaison and Learning Support

The focus of the internship was on Faculty Liaison and Learning Support. Since the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, where I am a graduate library trainee, is not affiliated to a university, it was particularly interesting for me to see what kind of services the library provides for students, teachers and researchers, and how the library cooperates with and supports faculties.

I learned that the library has a very special position in the university; it is the mediator for collection management and administrator for the respective budgets. The faculties, however, are responsible for acquisition decisions because they are in charge of the financial means.

Therefore, a faculty liaison programme was initiated with the following aim:

1. Enhance formal and informal communication between the Library and Faculty.
2. Increase awareness and use of Library resources and services.
3. Strengthen Library collections to meet curricular and research needs.
4. Provide relevant information literacy instruction and support life-long learning initiatives.⁴

One liaison librarian should function as a point of contact to each institute or department, make arrangements on collection management, suggest relevant literature, function as a mediator between different institutes who aspire to make an expensive purchase together, and provide research trainings as well as services as subject oriented guides. On the side of the departments and institutes a library chair should be announced who is in charge to communicate with the library.

However, since a great number of librarians was involved in this programme, each of them being able to dedicate only a limited amount of time, the exchange was irregular and responsibilities were sometimes inconsistent. Therefore the programme was restructured; in the current version, one liaison librarian is responsible for one faculty. Altogether, there are eight faculty liaison librarians, responsible for the eight faculties and the three College libraries. Since one liaison librarian is responsible for the Chung Chi College library and one is responsible for the New Asia and United College libraries, the responsibilities of the liaison librarians – particularly in the case of the Faculty of Arts – are partly subdivided according to the subject areas covered by the College libraries.⁵

Together with the Faculty of Arts' liaison librarian responsible for Chinese Studies I visited the Centre for China Studies. We had a liaison meeting with the institute's library chair and discussed

⁴ <http://www.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/en/learning/faculty-liaison> (accessed Sept. 21, 2015)

⁵ <http://www.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/en/learning/faculty-liaison> (accessed Sept. 21, 2015)

questions concerning collection development, how the library can support the centre with materials relevant for teaching and research as well as the centre's new collection policy.

With regard to Chinese Studies, the liaison librarian has not only contact to the Centre for China Studies, but to many institutes who have programmes with relevance to Chinese Studies, such as philosophy, art, anthropology, history, linguistics, etc. In comparison to European or North American libraries, Chinese libraries, of course, do not have special Chinese or East Asia studies collections, but the resources form a huge part of the collections and are distributed among the collection.

As one can imagine, from the library's point of view the success of this cooperation depends very much on the faculties, in how far they are willing to share information on curricula and research topics. In very few cases such as the Law Library the law faculty liaison librarian is staff of the faculty, furthermore, he is invited to join different faculty meetings, hence he is able to enhance the communication between the library and the faculty and to increase awareness of library services on the side of the faculty. In this regard, the law librarian's liaison work can be seen as a role model. Other faculty liaison librarians hope to get a similarly close relationship to their faculties in terms of collection development and integrating information and academic literacy courses into the curriculum.

Another form of liaison work is to introduce the library's resources with respect to the faculties' disciplines and courses. With LibGuides by Springshare the library recently introduced a new service to its readers.⁶ With these guides the faculty liaison librarians aim to provide information on how to find relevant resources in the reading room and to promote important reference literature as well as electronic resources such as article databases, e-book collections, archival materials, etc. Furthermore, they provide information on important free online resources relevant to the subject.

In a small project I created a LibGuide for the subject Modern Chinese History.⁷ Therefore, I had the chance to test the functions and possibilities of LibGuide by myself, how best to present important and useful materials. I think LibGuides is a useful tool. The content management system is easy to use and gives the possibility to provide information on resources in a standardised but well-arranged and presentable way.

Résumé

After the internship at CUHK Library I returned to Berlin being very inspired by the impressions of the past three weeks. For my future career – and for life – I learned a lot about designing learning and research environments in a way adaptable to users' needs. I also learned how liaison with

⁶ <http://libguides.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/> (accessed Sept. 21, 2015)

⁷ http://libguides.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/modern_china (accessed Sept. 21, 2015)

the library's target group can be established and improved; I hope that I can introduce some of my ideas to my future work.

Although some aspects are different to the Staatsbibliothek because of the different target groups, such as working together with faculties and the university, I was astonished to learn that the main issues the library is dealing with at the moment are rather similar to those in Germany: shaping a library and creating services that fit the users' needs in a digital age.

I was particularly impressed by the staff's dynamics and commitment. For example, this year's semester started the week after I finished the internship. It was very impressive to see how the departments worked together to prepare themselves for the start of the semester in September. For example, the last construction works and renovations of group study rooms and even one of the branch libraries were finished, posters and banners with information for the incoming students were put up, library orientation tours for undergraduates and postgraduates were provided in Cantonese, Mandarin and English. At the beginning of the semester more roving staff is available in the library in order to assist the new students. Since postgraduates' and undergraduates' orientation programmes already started in the last week of August and first week of September, I had the chance to see students coming back to the campus and occupying more and more spaces of the library.

Last but not least I was impressed by the library's interest in international exchange. They were not only very open to share their best practices and ideas with me, they were eager to learn more about recent developments in German research libraries as well. Therefore, I was glad that I have been asked to share some experiences with them; in a presentation at the Professional Staff Team meeting I spoke on the challenges for German research libraries with the transfer from Special Subject Collections to Specialised Information Services. I am grateful that I could give something back to the library and I hope that my time at CUHK Library was as inspiring and informative for the staff as it was for me.