

Preserving and Reconstructing Hong Kong's Historical Past: Experiences and Reflections of the HONG KONG MEMORY PROJECT

Y.C. Wan The University of Hong Kong Libraries 19 November 2009

The Hong Kong Memory Project



Build a digital repository for the collection, conservation, presentation and dissemination of Hong Kong's historical and cultural heritage

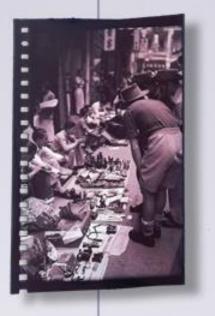
- Collect from different sources materials in textual, graphic, audio-visual forms and present on the web to readers in an interactive and user-friendly way
 - Provide free and open access to the general public, students, teachers, and scholars, in Hong Kong and other parts of the world

Agenda

- Hong Kong in brief
- Key players
- Background
- Progress
- Reflections
- What to do next



Hong Kong in Brief



- Situated at the south-eastern tip of China
- A total area of 1,104 square kilometres, comprising Hong Kong Island, Kowloon Peninsular and the New Territories
- A population of about 7 million
- Both Chinese and English are official languages

A Place When East Meets West

- A Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China on 1 July 1997, after a century and a half of British administration
- Described as a 'barren rock with hardly a house upon it' some 150 years ago
- Hong Kong is now a financial, trading and business centre, and a city of towering buildings



Key Players – The HKSAR Government



Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), the government department responsible for enriching life of Hong Kong people by providing quality leisure and cultural services

 It operates the Hong Kong Public Libraries (HKPL) – a network of 76 libraries, 18 museums, civic centres, parks, performing venues, etc.

Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC)

- One of the largest racing organizations in the world
- It operates on a not-for-profit business model whereby its surplus goes to charity
- Over the past decade, it has donated an average of HK\$1 billion every year to charities and community projects



Centre of Asian Studies (CAS), HKU



A research facility established in 1967 to promote interdisciplinary research on Asian topics within the University and to serve as focal point of contact for Asian studies scholars around the world

 Hong Kong Culture and Society programme is one of the three flagship programmes of the Centre

The University of Hong Kong Libraries (HKUL)

- Established in 1912 to provide teaching and research support collections and services to the university community
- Its collection of Hong Kong materials, particularly printed ones, is the largest in Hong Kong
- Partnered with CAS on a number of Hong Kong-related projects

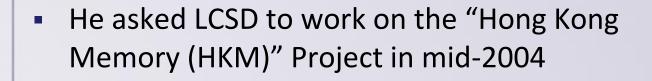




And... researchers, content holders, members of the general public ...

Background

- Initiated by Dr Patrick Ho, former Secretary for Home Affairs, in 2002
- A response to the "Memory of the World" programme, which was launched by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1992 to preserve historical records through digitization





Feasibility Study



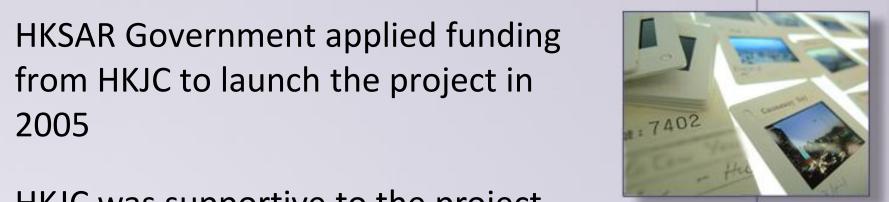
- LCSD started with setting up a project team
- Initiated a feasibility study and after a tendering exercise, awarded the contract to a technology company (IT Consultant)
- The IT Consultant took up the technical part
- It also commissioned two researchers from CAS to look into the content infrastructure
- Both IT and content reports submitted by IT Consultant to LCSD in mid-2005

HKJC was supportive to the project

2005

Content development should carry more 'weight'

from HKJC to launch the project in



Funding

HKU Team

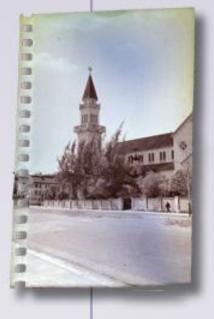


- CAS approached HKUL to submit a joint proposal to HKJC for creating the HKM website: CAS handling content development and HKUL providing IT support
 - Submitted a funding proposal of HK\$53 million (US\$6.8 million) in early 2006
- In August 2006, HKJC approved funding of up to HK\$80 million (US\$10 million) for supporting the HKM Project for the first 5 years

A Joint Project

- HKM is a joint project between HKJC and LCSD
- The HKU team participates in the project, responsible for content development and system setup of the digital repository for the first five years
- HKM Project was listed an item in the 2006/7 Policy Agenda of the HKSAR Government





The Project: Nov 2006 -

Create a Management Framework

- Set up a Company, LCSD or HKU?
- Joint Meeting on the Hong Kong Memory Project, attended by representatives from LCSD, HKJC, CAS and HKUL, coordinated by LCSD
- A venue where issues related to the project are reported, discussed and sometimes agreed upon
- Met five times since 2007



Recruit and Retain a Project Team

Content development – Project
Consultant, Project Coordinator,
Research Officer, Assistant Research
Officer, Research Assistant, and Designer



- IT setup Systems Coordinator, IT Officer, Programmer
- 12 full-time staff are now working on the project

Synergy between Librarians and Researchers



- Partnership and understanding amongst team members with different expertise
- CAS responsible for daily administration of the HKM Project - subject to staffing and financial regulations of HKU
- Consult with HKJC on key issues
- Submit quarterly report to HKJC

Engage and Work with Collaborators to Create Contents



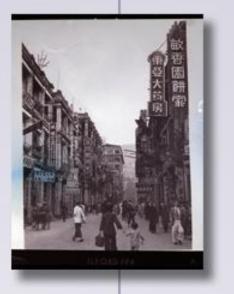
- Government departments, e.g., Public Records Office, museums
- Libraries
- Companies, etc. e.g., Swire, Celestial Pictures
- Chambers of Commerce
- Individual content holders
- Researchers

Devise a Mechanism for Proposal Submission and Approval

- Drew up funding guidelines to help prepare proposal and budget
- Assessment process and criteria
- Proposal assessment form with 7 assessment criteria for all funding proposals, regardless of funding sought
- Evaluation and approval by a 6-member evaluation committee



Formulate Copyright Guidelines



- Secured the service of a legal consultant, who is a professor in computer science and a barrister in intellectual property
- Compiled a set of copyright guidelines based on issued raised by project team members
- Designed copyright license agreement
- Provided training to team members
- Attended meetings related to copyright issues

Create a Mock-up HKM Website and Conduct Usability Tests

- Used the Greenstone software to manage contents before acquiring and setting up the HKM platform
- Created a mock-up website earlier this year with the contents created so far
- Conducted usability tests to gauge feedback of teachers and students in May
- Will create another mock-up website early next year



Network with Other Memory Projects



- American Memory (LC)
- Beijing Memory (Capital Library, China)
- Taiwan Memory (National Central Library, Taiwan)
- Macau Memory (Macau Foundation)

Start the HKM Web Portal System Tendering Process

- Issued a tender for the HKM hardware and software in June 2009
- Formed a 5-member tender evaluation committee



- Drew up tender evaluation criteria/weighting
- Product demonstrations completed in mid-October
- And the winner is ...

Reflections: (views of a librarian and a member)

THE HONG KONG MEMORY PROJECT

A Digital Library Project

- HKM is not my first digital library project
- This is not just another digital library project:
 - A project that needs to start from scratch
 - A project that matters to the community at large
 - A project that needs to transfer ownership
 - A project that involves many players and stakeholders



What's More:



- A multi-million digital library project (money isn't everything?)
- A HK government digital library project (does this make our life easier?)
- A 5-year digital library project (time flies!)

Two More Years To Go, We Need To:

- Set up IT infrastructure and proceed to creating the website
- Populate the website with more contents
- Enlist the participation of more collaborators
- Raise the visibility of HKM Project
- Engage the public
- Be prepared for criticisms and complaints ...





The plan is to hand over the HKM website (together with documentations, hardware, etc.) to HKJC/LCSD on or before Oct 2011



Thank you!