Welcome to the first issue of HKU’s Knowledge Exchange Newsletter.

Portraits of Knowledge Exchange

The Ongoing Quest to Share HKU’s Knowledge with Society

"Knowledge exchange", or KE, is a phrase that has become an increasingly frequent topic of conversation with my colleagues at HKU, alongside the usual discussions about the University’s research strategies and developments, our children’s education and our hobbies. I'm pleased to see colleagues want to know more about the possibilities of contributing to society through their academic work and about the implications that KE has for them. And it's good to see that more and more colleagues realize this is not a new thing. In fact, HKU has been engaging in KE work for many years, although without the KE banner to identify it as such.

KE is all about sharing our expertise and the knowledge we create to enhance the material, human, social, cultural and environmental well-being of our society. This is a two-way process that can involve industry, business, the public sector, non-governmental organizations, professional societies and the general public. It encompasses not only technology transfer but all disciplines, including arts, humanities and social sciences.

Much has been said about the benefits to society of KE, including in the articles you will read in this newsletter. But it should also be remembered that KE can maximize the impact of our academic work. Research output traditionally has been measured in terms of the impacts it has on the academic community through research publications, journal editorships, academic conferences, etc. KE enables us to also consider the impacts of our research on society, the economy and our quality of life. The partnerships that characterize KE can also lead us to discover unmet needs and new ideas for future research.

Furthermore, KE can inform our teaching and learning by providing real-life examples that we can share with our students. This ensures that students are learning the most relevant skills and knowledge, and how they can be applied.

As a researcher, I find great satisfaction when our findings result in a product or practice that resolves a pain or difficulty in people’s lives or an existing problem in industry; when our research influences policy development for the benefit of society; when we contribute to solving problems for an NGO or practitioners; when we bring arts and cultural enrichment to the community; and when we enhance the knowledge of the general public.

The University also values the contributions of KE and the possibilities it offers to enrich our academic work. A KE Executive Group has been set up comprising Professor John Malpas, Professor John Bacon-Shone, Professor Paul Cheung and myself to oversee strategic developments in KE, while all faculties have set up their own KE units. The focus on KE policies, infrastructure and supporting initiatives will help to create an enabling environment for further developing our KE work.

The stories presented in this newsletter demonstrate the breadth of HKU’s KE activities and showcase the impacts our faculty members have made on the wider community. They also show that our colleagues have undertaken KE with a heartfelt commitment.

Professor Paul K H Tam
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) &
Director, Knowledge Exchange Office

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Embedding KE at All Levels

KE is a vital part of the University's activities alongside teaching & learning and research. It is explicitly recognized in HKU's Strategic Development Plan 2009-2014 that it has positive implications at both the Faculty and individual staff levels.

In the near future KE will be included as a measure of a Faculty's success in the budgetary process and those that respond effectively to the increased strategic importance of KE will be rewarded. Similarly, those colleagues who have the passion to make use of their expertise and knowledge to benefit the wider community will have their work in KE and their contributions beyond academia recognized in the staffing process. While KE will not be a requirement for all academic staff, a separate weighting of KE in the main portfolios of professoriate staff, together with core and faculty-specific criteria for personnel events such as promotion, will be developed after consultation with the Faculties.

Together these measures help to demonstrate the University’s deep commitment to not only achieving KE, but embedding it in our culture. It is now a core element of our work.

Professor John Malpas  
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Infrastructure)

Contributions Come From All Disciplines

KE encompasses a lot of different activities. It is perhaps most visible in traditional technology transfer or commercialization, and yet our academics in non-technology-related disciplines also make important contributions to society. Their work has had impacts on practitioner practice, culture, the environment and the development of research-informed public policies, among many other areas.

An essential component of all our KE work is community engagement. Community engagement is now incorporated into every Faculty, resulting in stronger partnerships with business, the public sector, NGOs and community groups. These connections can lead to innovative KE initiatives that benefit the partners involved, including the University, and even the general public.

Whatever the specific form, HKU always aims to take part in KE that is rooted in research excellence, involves high quality engagement and makes a significant impact beyond academia. The stories shared by the nine recipients of the Faculty KE Awards 2011 in this newsletter are strong examples of our goals.

Professor John Bacon-Shone  
Associate Director, Knowledge Exchange Office

Technology Transfer: A Bridge from Research to Real-world Application

It is widely recognized that innovation is crucial to the future economic growth of not only Hong Kong but also Mainland China. Universities, as the knowledge base of society, play a significant role in generating innovations through research, but in order to get these innovations to real-world application, they need to engage in technology transfer. Technology transfer therefore is one of the major components of KE.

The process of turning research outcomes into a sustainable commercial application is very challenging – it requires a lot of time, effort and, most importantly, commitment from the researchers. The University put in place infrastructure to support technology transfer in 2006, even before the University Grants Committee’s advocacy of KE from 2009. Two units are responsible for this work: the Technology Transfer Office, which provides technology transfer-related services to academic colleagues, and Versitech, a wholly-owned enterprise of HKU which handles commercialization and business arrangements with industry.

Our technology transfer function is underpinned by the goal of seeing our researchers’ work have a real and positive impact on society – a drug that saves lives, a solution that works for industry, a product that improves the quality of life, etc. We are also thinking of the future and are striving to nurture an entrepreneurial spirit among our postgraduate students so that they, and HKU, can continue to make beneficial contributions to our community.

Professor Paul Cheung  
Director, Technology Transfer Office &  
Associate Director, Knowledge Exchange Office
Re-Imagining Urban Space

The sight of high-rises crammed together against a backdrop of green mountain peaks is Hong Kong’s signature, but does that represent good architecture?

This question is at the heart of architectural biennales, events held every two years to bring together architects, planners, designers and the general community to consider the function and possibilities of architecture.

Hong Kong’s first biennale was held in 2007-08 under the curatorship of Wang Weijen, Associate Professor in the Department of Architecture, and attracted more than 70,000 visitors from Hong Kong and participants from Japan, the US, the UK, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and Mainland China.

The theme was “Re-fabricating the City” and the goal was to get the public thinking not just about architecture, but about urban spaces, or relationship between buildings.

“I don’t think there are more than three buildings of first-class architecture in Hong Kong, but everybody thinks Hong Kong is a fascinating city with very unique urban spaces. It has this very unique urban fabric and infrastructures that create urban spaces between older and newer districts, like the escalator in Mid-level connecting the old lanes and terraces to the new towers and malls in Central, and they continuously change,” Mr Wang says.

But Hong Kong also faces challenges. “With the fast pace of economic development, government and developers had never hesitated to take down and renew. And after 1997, with the development on the notion of culture and urban identity, the community’s attitudes gradually changed. The Star Ferry conservation event [in which people protested against the pier’s demolition] was one of the highlights of this. It triggered questions of who and what we are, what is our urban memory, and what kind of city we want to have.

“How can we address the spirit of creating new and still sustain and reform parts of the city to make them work well together? Facing the large scale developments in West Kowloon and many places, should we think more before we build? Should we think more on how they can be connected to the urban and social fabric of Mongkok, to moderate these relationships so that we are not just creating an enclave when we plan new districts and build new buildings?

“The vitality and momentum of Hong Kong are important – we don’t want a frozen tourist piece like Venice. But what can we learn from the past and how do we bring the past into the future?”

These ideas were explored in exhibitions, talks, workshops and other events held over the biennale’s three months at the historic compound of the Central Police Station - a living example of how to re-invigorate an old building. The large turnout showed the depth of public interest in the subject.

The biennale also involved Shenzhen, whose own first biennale in 2005 served to inspire Hong Kong to follow suit, and to work together in the following years as a Bi-city Biennale.

“Events like the biennale are not only about exchanging knowledge. It’s a platform for professionals like architects, scholars, planners and designers to share knowledge, and it’s also a platform for knowledge exchange with members of community. More importantly, I hope it can kick-start a regeneration of urban public spaces in Hong Kong,” Mr Wang says.

A second Hong Kong biennale was held in 2009 on City Mobility and a third is planned for later in 2011.

Improving People’s Thinking Skills

The Critical Thinking Web is a remarkable resource that offers online tutorials and resources to anyone who wants to learn more about critical thinking and improve their skills in evaluating knowledge.

It’s a live example of the concept of free and open education, offering the fun and the serious: the world’s hardest logic puzzle, a quiz to test the consistency of your moral beliefs, self-learning modules on basic logic, scientific reasoning, strategic thinking, creativity and other concepts, a downloadable mini-guide on critical thinking, and many other materials.

Dr Joe Lau, Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy, launched the website in 2004 in collaboration with Dr Jonathan Chan of Hong Kong Baptist University. It now attracts up to 40,000 visitors per month around the world.

Dr Lau says the website sprang from a desire to teach students more about logic and critical thinking, use information technology in teaching, and make learning resources available to the general public.

“I believe free and online education will completely change the way people teach and study, and this will particularly benefit developing countries and disadvantaged minorities. I wanted to contribute to this worthwhile cause and hence developed this project,” he says.

Those goals have been readily met. Secondary schools, community colleges and universities in places as diverse as Mongolia, Uzbekistan, South Africa and Australia are using the materials. The top 10 countries using the site in 2010 spanned four continents and included developed and developing economies: the US, Hong Kong, the UK, Canada, the Philippines, Australia, Malaysia, China and Singapore.

Business and professional communities have also been clicking on the pages. “They want to learn more about critical thinking to enhance their reasoning skills,” says Dr Lau. “Some of them have borrowed the material in their in-house training courses. The Institute of Chartered Financial Analysts of India has published some of the material in an anthology on critical thinking.”

The quality of the site has earned praises from the University Grants Committee and reviewers of HKU’s Department of Philosophy, but Dr Lau says the positive feedback from users has been the major factor in keeping the site going.

“I get emails from visitors saying they have found the material useful. It is gratifying to know for example that the website is helping students in Vanderbijlpark in South Africa to improve their thinking skills. The fact that everything is on the web and free makes the difference,” he says.

The content on the website is updated by Dr Lau and the site is hosted by HKU. The website was one of the first in Hong Kong to make use of a Creative Commons license, which aims to balance copyright laws with the open nature of the Internet and the objective of providing universal access to knowledge.

The Critical Thinking Web can be visited at: http://philosophy.hku.hk/think/
An Asian Angle on Business

Harvard University’s business school is famous for its case studies which are the gold standard of their kind. But what about Asian schools? Is it really relevant for them to be reading up on Florida car dealerships when there are so many dynamic and interesting businesses on their doorstep?

With that in mind, the Asia Case Research Centre was established to provide a steady stream of high quality Asian business case studies that have become popular not only among other universities, but also businesses. Harvard has also become a distributor.

In 2010 more than 120,000 copies of the Centre’s case studies were distributed in 102 countries. About one-fifth were bought by businesses, governments and NGOs who see them as a valuable source of information.

Professor Ali Farhoomand is Director of the Centre. “We are one of the few universities that works on Asian business case studies. What we are doing is transferring knowledge and passing it out to the academic and business communities so both of these communities can benefit.”

Nearly 500 cases have been produced to date, many of them featuring interviews with senior executives who agree to share information about their company’s operations and development for a higher purpose, according to the Centre’s manager, Jeroen van den Berg.

“Executives in Asia-Pacific companies are often people who have been with the company for a long time and may even have founded it. Once they reach a certain age and level of wealth, they want to contribute to society and share their knowledge, and they feel the case studies are a way for them to do this,” he says.

The case studies serve multiple roles. Universities use them to make theories more relevant to students, while businesses use them as a source of information, for recruitment purposes (for example, having management candidates prepare presentations based on a case study), and for internal training.

Major firms such as Citibank, Li & Fung, IBM and PCCW are all clients of the Centre, as is Hong Kong’s Independent Commission Against Corruption, which asked it to prepare cases on grey areas of corruption.

To further serve Hong Kong, the Centre also offered in 2010 to make its case collection available to all Hong Kong-registered companies at no charge.

“The case studies have helped us to develop closer ties with the regional business community and a deeper understanding of the practical issues they face each day,” Professor Farhoomand says.

“This means we can make teaching more relevant to the needs of the business community, and it also means businesses benefit because the next generation of business leaders are trained with this understanding.”

The lessons have also been taken further afield through the television production, Business Leaders Series, which featured case studies from the Centre and interviews with senior executives of top Asian firms. The series was aired by BBC World News, ATV World and on many airlines.

Children Get a Healthy Smile

The oral health of young children in Hong Kong is a worry because nearly half of them have dental caries, or cavities, one of the highest rates in the world. Until recently, awareness of the problem has been low and treatment even more problematic because it is hard to get pre-school children to sit still in a dentist’s chair. Dr Chun-Hung Chu and his team have been working to change that.

Dr Chu, Clinical Associate Professor in Faculty of Dentistry, is a specialist in Family Dentistry who returned to academia in the 1990s to investigate how to address this problem of children’s oral health. The result is a programme that has reached more than 10,000 kindergarten-age children in Hong Kong so far.

“It takes years to train a paediatric dentist and years to solve the decay of only one child. When I look at society, many children are suffering. When the decay is untreated, it causes pain and local and systemic infection.

“By the time children enter primary school and the school dental health care service, many of the teeth with caries can’t be saved and need to be extracted. It’s already too late.”

Dr Chu’s solution is to apply the research he developed and to involve the wider community in bringing better oral health treatment and education to children.

His PhD focused on applying an agent – silver diamine fluoride – to stop teeth with decay from getting any worse. The agent is “painted” on the teeth and avoids the fearful prospect of dental chairs and drills.

“The best way to prevent decay is through proper teeth brushing using toothpaste and fluoridated water. Where there is decay, results of my PhD study showed that the silver diamine fluoride treatment can stop it from progressing. You don’t need to treat every child with it, just the ones at risk,” he says.

This was tested with children in Guangdong and showed good results, so he contacted church organizations to test the application here and offer oral health education training for teachers and pupils. Fourteen kindergartens were selected for the project in 2008 in collaboration with the Hong Kong Christian Service and the Alliance Church.

The success of that venture encouraged bigger thinking. In 2010 the project received funding from the S.K. Yee Medical Foundation and Colgate-Palmolive Co. Ltd to expand to 100 kindergartens. Additional NGOs such as Baptist Church and Tung Wah Group of Hospitals were involved.

A full-time dentist was hired to check the children’s teeth and apply the silver diamine fluoride to high-risk children. Talks were also organized for parents to raise awareness and answer questions, in addition to the teacher training.

“Dental caries is totally preventable and we hope by educating parents, it will improve oral hygiene practices in children,” Dr Chu says.

The response to the service has been overwhelmingly positive: 96 per cent of kindergartens surveyed said they were very satisfied or satisfied with it.

The success has been heartening for Dr Chu, who sees the project as a chance to help others and practice his Christian values.

“This is a passion for me. It gives me great satisfaction to offer help to society. I can go into the kindergartens and serve the children in an environment that’s familiar to them, screen out the at-risk children early and provide care, and do some early prevention work. It’s very meaningful work,” he says.

The hope now is that funding will be provided so others such as NGOs can take over the project and carry it forward in future.
Breathing New Life into an Art Form at Risk: Cantonese Opera

A desire to see Cantonese opera retain its place as an important part of Hong Kong’s culture has resulted in a project to promote the art form in local schools and the community.

Teaching materials and lesson plans on Cantonese opera have been compiled, school trips organized to see performances, and a book and documentary have been produced to try to elevate the opera’s status at a time when there are fears it may be dying out in Hong Kong.

According to Dr Dorothy Ng Fung-ping, Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education and leader of the project, the number of Cantonese opera performances in bamboo shed theatres in Hong Kong has dwindled from 158 in 1970 to 34 in 2010. The traditional bamboo sheds where operas are performed and the accompanying communal rituals are also under threat.

“This is a fading art and if we don’t do something to preserve it, it will disappear at a very fast rate,” she says.

The project started in four schools in 2007, when Dr Ng and her team started training teachers in how to integrate Cantonese opera into the curriculum, developed teaching materials and introduced students to texts and performances.

Initially teachers were skeptical and questioned whether Cantonese opera could be included in the new curriculum, particularly as it was unclear if it was language learning or liberal studies. Dr Ng says it is both – and then some.

“It’s language learning because you can admire the scripts. It’s literature. It’s part of liberal studies because you can look at the stage, costumes, music, performance and all of these things related to cultural heritage. And it offers a different learning experience because you can visit the bamboo shed theatres and watch the performances on site,” she says.

The efforts of her team convinced the teachers of the opera’s value and the success in those first four schools has led to more than 20 secondary schools integrating Cantonese opera into their curriculum.

In addition to her school work, Dr Ng has also been trying to stir public interest. She wrote a biography of popular artist, Leung Sing-boh, in 2009 which made it to the best-sellers’ list and received the 22nd Hong Kong Print Awards Distinguished Publishing Award, Genre (Biography). She has also worked with the Chinese Artists Association and universities in China and the US, produced a documentary about teaching Cantonese opera, and initiated research studies on opera scripts, opera singers, and learning outcomes for students studying the art form. Altogether 12 projects have been initiated to promote Cantonese opera.

The government is now taking a keener interest in her efforts, too, after UNESCO declared Cantonese opera to be a form of intangible heritage in 2009. Dr Ng has been appointed to several government advisory committees on the arts and Cantonese opera.

“Cantonese opera is part of Hong Kong culture. Hopefully our work can inspire the next generation to think about what our local identity and culture are and what we inherit,” she says.

A Secure Platform for E-Business

The spread of e-commerce has led to the need among businesses and organizations to safely exchange documents, such as invoices and sales reports, electronically. A HKU project has been instrumental in providing such a service.

Professor David Cheung, head of the Department of Computer Science, has led a team that developed free software which essentially creates a leased line between two parties. It has been adopted in more than 80 countries and become the standard of its kind.

"On the Internet, the exchange of documents is not secure and reliable. That means there’s a chance of A sending something to B, and B not receiving it or having it intercepted by somebody else," he says.

Our technology turns the Internet into a secure and reliable exchange. It’s like a leased line and nobody else can get onto that line.”

The appeal of the technology, called eBXML Gateway Hermes, stems not only from its function, but also the fact it is open source software and anyone can access it.

Most importantly, it has been developed to meet an international standard for electronic business transactions – the ISO 15000 – and had to undergo rigorous testing before achieving ISO certification.

The ISO 15000 standard was announced in 2002 and Professor Cheung said he and his team jumped at the chance to develop new software for it.

“I told my students, this is an opportunity to implement something big, we must jump on it. This kind of situation doesn’t happen often in an academic environment,” he says.

“Our strategy was to use an open source strategy and release the product to the community. Once we published the open source software license, we wanted everybody to adopt it. We wanted to do something that the community could use.”

The software was developed with funding from the government and the efforts of 25 full-time developers, and it was released in 2004.

It has been adopted by many users large and small, including the Hong Kong government, which is using the platform for its electronic trading service to accept trade declarations from importers and exporters. More than 20 million such documents are processed each year.

“This is a rare case because the government is very careful about using open source software, and this is one time when they have actually successfully adopted it. It is also rare because Hong Kong is an open society and the government doesn’t skew its decisions to give higher priority to local software products. But this product was developed by a local university,” he says.

Professor Cheung says they are continuing to develop and improve the software and have appointed a company to provide maintenance. HKU academics provide consultancy services for users as needed.

Professor David Cheung and the Center for E-Commerce Infrastructure Development (CECID) received the Faculty Knowledge Exchange Award 2011 of the Faculty of Engineering for the “eBXML Message Gateway Hermes and B2B Connector” project.
Making the Case for Animal Welfare

Hong Kong may be an advanced economy and boast of being “Asia’s World City”, but when it comes to protecting animal welfare, it is in many ways rooted in a deep, dark past.

A 2010 review of animal welfare legislation by Amanda Whitfort, Associate Professor in the Department of Professional Legal Education, and veterinarian Dr Fiona Woodhouse of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, has become a spark for change by pointing out the inadequacies in Hong Kong’s laws and suggesting a more humane approach.

Hong Kong laws currently are concerned with prevention of cruelty rather than the promotion of a duty of care, and typically cruelty cannot be proven until harm to the animal has already been done.

“...in most cases animals are not harmed by deliberate cruelty but by acts of negligence. However you can’t do anything legally until the animals actually begin to suffer – an animal in danger of suffering has no legal protection at all,” Ms Whitfort says. So if an animal is left without food or water, they have to already be starving or dehydrated to prosecute for cruelty.

“People who keep animals should provide care for them which is more than just protection from cruelty. They should be legally required to provide a minimum standard of living so animals are not hungry or thirsty and they have shelter, medical attention and a chance to engage in their natural behaviors (such as exercise).”

The duty-of-care approach has been adopted in such other jurisdictions as the U.S., Taiwan, Australia, Europe and New Zealand, and the authors are hoping Hong Kong will be prodded into following suit.

The 180-page review examines the current welfare of animals in all types of situations – slaughterhouses, wild animals, strays, laboratory animals and pets – from both a legal and scientific perspective. So far, political parties across the spectrum have embraced the findings and the government has started to take notice and introduce some changes in its policies.

Slaughterhouses, for example, have reduced the voltage of electric shocks and introduced noise flappers to help get animals moving into pens and along chutes.

The Department of Justice is proactively reviewing sentences for animal cruelty convictions. The report showed sentences had not changed since the maximum penalty was increased in 2006 to three years in prison and a $200,000 fine, from the old standard of six months in prison and a $5,000 fine.

The government has agreed to trial a trap-neuter-release programme for strays, which is more humane than the current capture-and-kill policy, after the review showed trap-neuter-release was legally viable in Hong Kong. It has also been shown in other countries to be more effective in controlling feral animal populations.

And the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department is developing a code of practice for the care of companion animals, and has begun meeting regularly with the police and SPCA to discuss animal welfare cases.

Ms Whitfort said there was still much more that could be done, such as introducing legislation based on a duty of care, but the review had achieved some important aims, most notably putting the issue of animal welfare on the public agenda.

“Laws should do what they were intended to do and when it comes to laws protecting animals, we had to ask, are they actually protecting animals?” she says.

“No one had sat down before and looked at animal welfare laws in Hong Kong like this. We wanted to give the public the data and let the government see how the current legislation is now appallingly outdated.”

Empowering Patients through Knowledge

Treating sick children requires more than the expertise of doctors and nurses. Parents and even the community need to support the children too by minimizing irritants and exposure to dangers, particularly for chronic diseases such as asthma or food allergies.

The Department of Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine understand this and in 2009 launched a book series to explain common childhood illnesses in simple terms and promote awareness. The hope was that not only parents, but other people would understand the need to advocate for children’s health.

Four illustrated books have been published so far on eczema, food allergies, rheumatic diseases and, most recently, allergic rhinitis, and the Department hopes to continue publishing a new volume each year. A team of doctors worked with parents’ groups to address medical and practical issues in the books, drawing on clinical and research expertise and the parents’ own experiences.

Several thousand copies have been sold and plans are underway to publish the books in Taiwan and possibly Mainland China, and distribute them to Singapore.

The Head of the Department and Doris Zimmerm Professor in Community Child Health, Professor Yu-Lung Lau, helped to instigate the project from a passionate belief in the power of knowledge.

“I’m really of the view that being a doctor is not just about diagnosing and treating, but that one of our most important roles is empowering our families and children to know their illness, so they will be responsible and take charge of their health. To do that they must understand the nature of the disease, when their illness is under control and when it is not, and when they need to seek help,” he says.

“Some of the diseases are about lifestyle or environmental issues, so parents need to know how to control their home environment and perhaps persuade the government to make the general environment more friendly for their children’s health. Perhaps they can persuade the government to have better food labelling for food allergies, and control cigarette smoke to get better air quality for children who have asthma and allergic rhinitis.”

Professor Lau says such actions help to involve people in a civic society, which he sees as ultimately positive for children’s health.

These ambitious goals have been matched by a commitment to involve parents in the treatment of their children and in the development of the book series. Parents have been encouraged to form associations for sharing knowledge and experiences in managing their children’s health.

The Department also produced a DVD to accompany the book series, which features parents talking about such things as preparing their children for treatment and buying the right food, and demonstrates how to apply treatments like an inhaler and EpiPen.

Parent Frank Wong, who is chairman of The Hong Kong Allergy Association, says this kind of sharing and practical advice can help parents cope. “Some parents are really nervous when they know their child has an allergy, like a food allergy, because it may be life-threatening.

“They need to hear the experience of other patients and parents so they don’t have fear – to see what daily life is like, going to school, and what happens when you have an incident. When they see other parents manage the allergy for their children, or even children manage it themselves, their quality of life can improve so much. They can have hope.”

Mr Wong says his association also wants to encourage changes in government policies on such things as food labelling, a goal that dovetails with Professor Lau’s broader vision.

“This is about empowering people to be responsible members of a civic society that wants a scientific basis for government policy, so they not only understand their illness, but also see their mission beyond their immediate family. The hope for the future is for Hong Kong to have a responsible civic society,” he says.

Professor Yu-Lung Lau and his team members, Dr Tsu-Leung Lee, Dr Hok-Kong Ho and Dr So-Lun Lee, received the Faculty Knowledge Exchange Award 2011 of the Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine for “A Series of Books on Important Paediatric Diseases for the Public.”
A Step Up for Struggling Students

About one in 10 students in Hong Kong’s primary and secondary schools has specific learning difficulties in reading and writing, or dyslexia. But until recently, they lacked proper support in the classroom.

The situation was a concern to Professor Connie Ho of the Department of Psychology and the Education Bureau. Five years ago they joined forces, with funding from the Hong Kong Jockey Club, to set up a new network that provides assessment, training and a curriculum for struggling students.

The READ & WRITE project was launched in 2006 in around 40 kindergartens, 37 primary schools and 20 secondary schools, with the involvement of around 10 NGOs and 10 government units. It focuses on reading and writing because these are the areas where affected students have the greatest difficulty.

The project departs from the norm in language learning in Hong Kong schools to target students with the greatest needs.

“In Hong Kong the approach to reading is mainly through learning a large number of passages or texts – they don’t have a systematic way to teach basic language skills. Our curriculum emphasizes that learning basic skills systematically is important for all children but especially helpful for low achievers and dyslexic children,” Professor Ho says.

An evidence-based approach called “tiered intervention” has been adopted so schools can provide intervention according to students’ needs.

Tier 1 aims to improve the language learning of all students through systematic language skills teaching. Those who struggle receive Tier 2 support in the form of additional small group teaching. Students who still lag behind after this or are diagnosed as dyslexic move to Tier 3, where they get individualized and intensive intervention.

The results of this approach have been impressive. Most students in Tiers 2 and 3 improved their performance on the Hong Kong benchmark tests. These tests are vital to a child’s education future because they are standardized across the city, meaning they apply not only in an individual school but also in the whole educational system.

The greatest improvement was seen among primary school students, where about 25 per cent more of Tiers 2 and 3 students were able to meet the benchmark after one year’s intervention.

“Students at all levels improved after school-based intervention, but the result was most encouraging for primary schools. I think this is the right time to give early intervention, when students start to formally learn to read,” Professor Ho says.

The project has also helped parents to support their children through help and advice on after-school care, emotional issues and daily management of their children. District-based support networks have been established in Sham Shui Po, Tiu Shui Tai and Tung Chung, and public awareness measures have helped to make the general community more aware of the needs of these children.

Professor Ho, who has steered the project, says the experience has also enriched her own teaching, making it a true example of knowledge exchange.

“In the past I didn’t have many opportunities to visit schools and learn about school practice in the field. Through this project, I have gone to many schools and had meetings with many teachers, and this has helped me in teaching my educational psychology students about the real needs of students in schools. It’s not good enough to just pass on book knowledge,” she says.

Professor Connie S H Ho received the Faculty Knowledge Exchange Award 2011 of the Faculty of Social Sciences for the “READ & WRITE: A Jockey Club Learning Support Network” project.

Faculty Knowledge Exchange Awards 2011

Introduced in 2011, the Faculty KE Awards aim to recognize each faculty’s outstanding KE accomplishment that has made demonstrable economic, social or cultural impacts to benefit the community, business/industry, or partner organizations.

Nominations are considered by an Ad Hoc Faculty KE Award Selection Committee of the Faculty concerned, comprising the Dean (Chairman), the Faculty representative serving on the KE Working Group, an external member, and one of the Associate Directors of the Knowledge Exchange Office. Selection is based on the following criteria:

1. Quality of the knowledge: Evidence of links of the project that has achieved the KE impacts with excellence in research or in teaching and learning at HKU;
2. Effectiveness of the communication process: Evidence of an effective engagement process with the community, business/industry, or partner organizations; and
3. Impacts achieved: Evidence of demonstrable benefits to the community, business/industry, or partner organizations.

Each Faculty KE Award carries a monetary award of HK$50,000 for the awardee to carry out further KE work. Individual Faculties have the flexibility to decide whether to conduct a Faculty KE Award exercise in a particular year, taking into account the Faculty’s KE developments.

This year nine Faculties introduced the Award, and altogether 41 nominations of outstanding quality were received. Nine awards were made, one by each participating Faculty. The success stories of the awardees are presented under Features of this newsletter.

Luncheon for recipients of the Faculty KE Awards on September 7, 2011

From left, front row: Awardees Mr Weijien Wang (Faculty of Architecture), Dr Joe Y F Lau (Faculty of Arts), Ms Amanda Whitfort (Faculty of Law), Dr Dorothy F P Ng (Faculty of Education), Professor Connie S H Ho (Faculty of Social Sciences), Dr Brian Chung (on behalf of Professor Y T Lau), Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine), Dr Chun-Hung Chiu (Faculty of Dentistry)

From left, back row: Dr Roger C K Chan (Associate Dean [Research] of the Faculty of Architecture), Professor Y S Hung (Associate Dean [Knowledge Exchange] of the Faculty of Engineering), Professor Paul Cheung (Director of the Technology Transfer Office), Professor Lap-Chee Tsui (Vice-Chancellor and President), Professor John Bacon-Shone (Associate Director of the Knowledge Exchange Office), Dr Yoshihiko Nakano (Associate Dean of the Faculty of Arts), Dr Felix W H Chan (Associate Dean [Research] of the Faculty of Law)
Knowledge exchange (KE) has become a core element at the faculty level. KE activities are embedded in all faculties at HKU, and indeed have been so for some time. Talking about translation and application of new knowledge to benefit society, you may not immediately associate it with basic science disciplines.

Our Faculty of Science recognizes that KE is a challenge, but also embraces it as an integral part of its knowledge mission. One of the Faculty’s goals is to promote science literacy in society as a whole and it has been achieving this through a body of KE activities aimed at local secondary schools, industry and government, and the general public.

Each year the Faculty organizes dozens of activities that together attract thousands of participants from outside the University community.

Some of these result in a direct transfer of knowledge. In 2010-11, for example, statistics officials in Jiangsu provincial government received five days of training from the Department of Statistics and Actuarial Science, a programme that is held every year.

The Department of Earth Sciences trained 30 staff of the Hong Kong government’s Civil Engineering and Development Department in applied geophysics last year, and contributed to a geology course to tour guides of Hong Kong’s Geopark. The Department is also planning to offer a training course in aerial photographic interpretation.

Designated as a Regional Centre of Excellence in Marine Pollution by the United Nations (UN), the School of Biological Sciences has been commissioned by the UN’s Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PIMSEA) to conduct international training workshops on new technologies in marine environmental management for environmental professionals.

Other activities are aimed at increasing the public’s general knowledge about science. “Making science knowledge accessible and understandable to the general public is a journey rather than a destination. We make it a long-term commitment with sustainable efforts,” Professor W S Cheung, Associate Dean (Development and External Relations), says. Professor Cheung serves on the KE Working Group of the University as a representative of the Science Faculty.

For instance, 12 public lectures, seminars and dialogue session were organized in 2010-11 that featured Nobel Laureates and other distinguished speakers and covered a wide range of science topics such as carbon dioxide and global change, sustainable biofuels, the origins of Earth-like planets, and the universe’s baby picture. More than 2,300 people attended these events.

The expertise of Faculty members are highly sought after, especially by the media in cases where authoritative explanation of science is required, for example, after the earthquake and tsunami that happened in Japan on March 11, 2011.

Schools, of course, are also a key target in the Faculty’s community engagement programme. Efforts are directed at sharing knowledge with teachers and providing opportunities for secondary school students to stretch their abilities.

In 2010-11 these activities included a training workshop for teachers on polymerase chain reaction, 17 programmes organized by the Faculty’s Junior Science Institute to give secondary school students experience in laboratory work, field trips and workshops, and talks delivered to 60 schools and 5,000 secondary school students through the Talk@MySchool programme. Opportunities were also organized for gifted students, such as a 10-week course on harmonics in nature run jointly by the Department of Mathematics and the Department of Physics, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education. The Department of Earth Sciences will develop an enhancement programme for gifted students and develop a web-based course on paleontology, which was commissioned by the Education Bureau of the HKSAR government.

“Although the KE activities organized at the faculty and departmental levels, our faculty members have numerous KE activities done at the professional level through talks, conferences, and contract research commissioned by external organizations. We are proud that many professors and support staff members of the Faculty engage in various KE activities on their own initiative,” Professor Cheung says.

All told, the Faculty of Science’s KE strategy is a good example to illustrate the breadth and depth of knowledge exchange that is being undertaken in HKU.

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**Facility Knowledge Exchange Units**

As Knowledge Exchange is a core element not only at the institutional level but also at the faculty level, all ten Faculties have set up their KE units as a formal structure within the Faculty. Each Faculty KE unit is led by the faculty representative who serves on the KE Working Group, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Architecture</th>
<th>Dr Roger Chan</th>
<th>Associate Dean (Research)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Dr Yoshiko Nakano</td>
<td>Associate Dean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business &amp; Economics</td>
<td>Professor Simon Lam</td>
<td>Associate Dean (Research)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dentistry</td>
<td>Professor I P Samarayake</td>
<td>Dean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Professor Edwin Yiu</td>
<td>Associate Dean (KE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Professor Y S Hung</td>
<td>Associate Dean (KE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>Dr Felix Chan</td>
<td>Associate Dean (Research)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>Professor Daniel Chan</td>
<td>Associate Dean (External Relations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Professor W S Cheung</td>
<td>Associate Dean (Development and External Relations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>Professor John Bacon-Shone</td>
<td>Associate Dean (KE)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Faculty KE units are supported by staff dedicated to work on KE. Working in concert with the Knowledge Exchange Office, the Faculty KE units play an instrumental role in promoting a culture conducive to KE at the faculty level and execute the Faculty KE plans to extend the power of the knowledge of the Faculties to the society at large.

As members of the KE Working Group, the above-mentioned faculty representatives also provide support to the KE Executive Group and co-ordinate the implementation of strategic KE initiatives.
Three Minute Thesis (3MT™) Competition 2011

“3MT gives me the opportunity to share my research findings with others, and this can increase my confidence and self-determination to continue my research career,” says Zhang Yalun, Champion of the HKU 3MT 2011.

“3MT has been an unforgettable experience. Although, at first I was apprehensive about the idea of turning what will be a 200-page thesis into a 3-minute presentation, I was immediately drawn to the challenge. The contest has sharpened my thesis direction, and opened up a valuable platform for me to continue to communicate the importance of literature and culture in our lives,” says Lai Soet Lin Selina, 1st runner-up.

“Taking part in the 3MT competition was a tremendous experience and challenge. Boiling down years of research into a few short minutes is an arduous task - but so many professional and everyday settings call for precisely such conciseness. And it is in precisely this challenge that the 3MT competition has so much charm,” says Aleksandr Borisovich Kogan, 2nd runner-up.

The inaugural Three Minute Thesis (3MT™) Competition of HKU was successfully held on June 17, 2011. 43 research postgraduate (RPG) students competed for 3 prizes decided by the adjudicating panel and the People’s Choice Award decided by audience ballot.

Developed by The University of Queensland (UQ), Australia, 3MT is an academic competition that challenges RPG students to explain their research within 3 minutes to a general audience. 3MT celebrates the discoveries made by RPG students and encourages them to develop the skills to communicate the importance of their research to the broader community.

We were honored to have Professor Sarah Roberts-Thomson, Deputy Dean of the UQ Graduate School, and Dr John Strickland, former member of the HKU Council 1996-2011, serving on the adjudicating panel as external members. Internal members of the adjudicating panel included Professor John Bacon-Shone, Associate Director of the Knowledge Exchange Office, and Professor Ben Young, Assistant Dean of the Graduate School, who served as co-chairmen, and Ms Trieni Choy, Acting Director of Communications.

Congratulations to all the winners of the Three Minute Thesis (3MT™) Competition 2011. They are:

Champion (awarded a research travel grant or book prize of HK$7,000)

Name: Mr. ZHANG Yalun
Degree Registered: PhD
Faculty: Medicine
Title of Presentation: Pax6 – A Novel Target in Stopping Alzheimer’s Neuronal Death
Primary Supervisor: Dr. Song You-Qiang

1st Runner-up (awarded a research travel grant or book prize of HK$5,000)

Name: Ms LAI Suet Lin, Selina
Degree Registered: PhD
Faculty: Arts
Title of Presentation: Twain White? The Translational Frame of Blackness in the Work of Mark Twain
Primary Supervisor: Dr. Kendall Johnson

2nd Runners-up (each awarded a research travel grant or book prize of HK$3,000)

i) Name: Mr. Aleksandr Borisovich KOGAN
Degree Registered: PhD
Faculty: Social Sciences
Title of Presentation: Intuitive Gene Detectors
Primary Supervisor: Dr. Cecilia Cheng

ii) Name: Ms YUEN Kit Man
Degree Registered: MPhil
Faculty: Medicine
Title of Presentation: A Comparison of Influenza A Induced Apoptosis in Human Alveolar Epithelial Cells
Primary Supervisor: Dr. John Nicholls

People’s Choice Award (awarded a research travel grant or book prize of HK$3,000)

Name: Ms LI Yunzi
Degree Registered: MPhil
Faculty: Arts
Title of Presentation: Translating “Waiting”
Primary Supervisor: Dr. Isaac Yue

In their closing remarks, both Professor Roberts-Thomson and Dr Strickland said that the quality of the research presented by the students was impressive.

“I hope that after the Competition, our students will find it a lot easier and enjoy talking about the relevance and significance of their research in layman’s language to everybody. The experience will be valuable to all the student participants,” says Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) Professor Paul Tam.

The 3MT Competition was jointly organized by the Graduate School and the Knowledge Exchange Office. The assistance of The University of Queensland in launching the 3MT Competition at HKU is deeply appreciated.

Winners of the 3MT Competition and members of the adjudicating panel
(From left) Professor Ben Young (Assistant Dean of the Graduate School), Yuen Kit Man (2nd Runner-up), Aleksandr Borisovich Kogan (2nd Runner-up), Zhang Yalun (Champion), Professor John Bacon-Shone (Associate Director of the Knowledge Exchange Office), Professor Sarah Roberts-Thomson (Deputy Dean of the UQ Graduate School), Dr John Strickland (former member of the HKU Council 1996-2011), Li Yunzi (winner of People’s Choice Award) and Trieni Choy (Acting Director of Communications) UN

Please visit www.kr.hku.hk or YouTube for the 3MT Winners’ presentation videos (keyword search on YouTube: Three Minute Thesis Hong Kong).
Entrepreneurship Academy

To foster an entrepreneurial culture and strengthen such pertinent skills in the University, the Technology Transfer Office initiated the Entrepreneurship Academy, under which eight workshops in Entrepreneurship were organized in each semester of 2010/11 for research staff, RPh students and alumni of related postgraduate programmes of the University. The invited speakers were either seasoned practitioners or academics specialising in entrepreneurship. The workshop series covered a range of topics at the core of entrepreneurship, focusing on integrating information and ideas from multiple perspectives in order to help participants recognize and gauge the critical factors in the commercialization process of innovations. They also provided plenty of networking opportunities for the speakers and participants. The Entrepreneurship Academy received an enthusiastic response from staff and RPh students, with over 100 participants in each semester. The excellent feedback evaluations received indicated that there is ample demand for entrepreneurship training in HKU. The Entrepreneurship Academy is expected to be held again in 2011/12.

Best Practice Sharing Seminars

KEO organizes regular seminars for colleagues interested in KE to share experience and best practices with a view to taking KE forward more effectively. The speakers’ presentations are available on the KE website (www.ke.hku.hk) to facilitate follow-up discussions between the speakers and interested participants and to allow others who could not attend a particular seminar to learn about the project. Past Seminars are as follows:

2010

- **February**
  - Knowledge Exchange – nothing new or something new?
    - by Professor J H Bacon-Shone, Knowledge Exchange Office, HKU

- **March**
  - The HKU Scholars Hub – Making Your Research and Expertise Highly Visible
    - by Mr David Palmer, University Libraries, HKU

- **April**
  - Fish and Bear Paw – A Reflection on the Role of Technology Transfer in University
    - by Professor Paul Y S Cheung, Technology Transfer Office, HKU

- **May**
  - How can academics get their research covered by the media? Explain it to your Mum!
    - by Ms Katherine Ma, Communications and Public Affairs Office, HKU

- **June**
  - Learn to Serve: Serve to Learn – Knowledge Exchange through Reconstruction Projects in Sichuan
    - by Dr Wilton Fok, Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, HKU

- **September**
  - Digital Publishing - The Future of Educational Publishing in Knowledge Exchange
    - by Mr Michael Duckworth, Hong Kong University Press

- **November**
  - Clinical Legal Education and Knowledge Exchange
    - by Mr Simon Young and Mr Edmond Lam, Faculty of Law, HKU

2011

- **January**
  - Promoting Knowledge Exchange with Creative Commons Licenses
    - by Professor Ying Chan, Journalism and Media Studies Centre, HKU

- **February**
  - Community Project Workshop - Faculty of Architecture’s initiative in Knowledge Exchange
    - by Ms Tris Kee, Faculty of Architecture, HKU

- **March**
  - Mapping the Civil Society in Hong Kong I: The Social Service Sector
    - by Dr Eliza Lee, Department of Politics and Public Administration, HKU

- **April**
  - New ITSP Application Forms and Assessment Framework
    - by Mr Davey P H Chung, Innovation and Technology Commission, HKSAR Government

- **May**
  - New technologies for Knowledge Exchange - From Web to Mobile Apps + ...
    - by Dr Wilton Fok, Faculty of Engineering, HKU

- **June**
  - Mindmap – An e-Platform Engaging the Community to Suicide Prevention
    - by Professor Paul Yip, Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention, HKU

On October 7, 2011, Professor Ying Chan of the Journalism and Media Studies Centre will talk about digital initiative for learning and knowledge exchange.

Then in November, Professor John Bacon-Shone of KEO and Mr David Palmer of the University Libraries will talk about an open access initiative. Details will be announced.
Knowledge, Innovation, Excellent Research: How to turn them into impacts for society?

The challenge is how to make the knowledge of higher education institutions accessible and work for society. The Knowledge Exchange Conference: Knowledge Transforming Society will provide new insights on how higher education institutions along with industry, business, the public sector, non-governmental organizations, and schools, etc., could work together to address the many complex issues facing Hong Kong and the region.

Knowledge transfer, or Knowledge Exchange (KE), has formally been recognized by the University Grants Committee (UGC) and is described as the “third mission” of higher education. The Knowledge Exchange Conference is jointly presented by the eight UGC-funded institutions in Hong Kong and is sponsored by the UGC. The Organizing Committee is co-chaired by Professor John Bacon-Shone and Professor Paul Cheung of HKU.

The Conference will also provide a platform for participants to share best KE practices worldwide. Presentations and discussions will cover:

- Developing a Mature Innovation Ecosystem in Hong Kong
- The Tried and Tested Roads of Knowledge Exchange
- Making Technology Transfer Thrive

- Innovation as a Key Target in China’s 12th Five-Year Plan
- Knowledge Partnerships
- Translating Knowledge into Solutions for Hong Kong
- KE Impact Assessment
- Open Access vs. Turning Knowledge into Income

The two-day conference also incorporates the UGC sponsored “3+3+4” Symposium on Knowledge Transfer, which will feature the following themes:

- Work-integrated Education
- Experiential Learning
- Entrepreneurship Programme

**Invited Speakers:**

- Miss Janet Wong
  Commissioner for Innovation and Technology, Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

- Hon. Mrs. Regina Ip, GBS, JP
  Member of the Legislative Council, Hong Kong

- Ir. Dr. Hon. Samson Tam, JP
  Member of Legislative Council (Information Technology), Hong Kong

- Prof. Eugene Wong
  Professor Emeritus, College of Engineering, University of California, Berkeley, USA

- Prof. Warren Bebbington
  Deputy Vice-Chancellor (University Affairs), The University of Melbourne, Australia

- Dr. Alan Paau
  Vice Provost for Technology Transfer and Economic Development, Cornell University, USA

- Prof. Teck Seng Low
  Managing Director, Agency for Science, Technology and Research, Singapore

- Dr. Stephen A. Merrill
  Executive Director, Board on Science, Technology, and Economic Policy (STEP), The National Academies, USA

- Ms. Qiu Xuan
  Vice Director, Science, Industry, Trade and Information Technology Commission of Shenzhen Municipality, PRC

- Mr. Michael Lynch, CBE, AM
  Chief Executive Officer, West Kowloon Cultural District Authority, Hong Kong

- Prof. dr. Maurits van Rooijen
  CEO & Rector Magnificus, Nyenrode Business Universiteit, The Netherlands

- Prof. Kim Knott
  Director of the Arts Innovation and Impact Centre and Professor of Religious Studies, University of Leeds; Director of the Arts and Humanities Research Council’s ‘Diasporas, Migration and Identities’ Programme, UK

- Mr. Jerry T. de la Harpe
  Executive Director (Knowledge Partnerships), The University of Melbourne, Australia

- Prof. Christopher Mgone
  Director of Enterprise and Knowledge Transfer, Faculty of Arts, University of Leeds, UK

- Mr. Tom Hockaday
  Managing Director, Isis Innovation Ltd, UK

- Prof. John Houghton
  Director of Information Technologies and the Information Economy Program, Centre for Strategic Economic Studies, Victoria University, Australia

- Ms. Yuka Hasegawa
  Chief Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, Japan

- Prof. Yuen Ying Chan
  Journalism and Media Studies Centre

- Prof. Chi-Ming Che
  Faculty of Science

- Prof. David W.L. Cheung
  Faculty of Engineering

- Prof. Daniel K.L. Chua
  Faculty of Arts

- Prof. Ron S.Y. Hui
  Faculty of Engineering

- Dr. Tammy Y.L. Kwan
  Faculty of Education

- Prof. Yok Lam Kwong
  Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine

- Prof. Peter K. K. Lee
  Faculty of Engineering

- Dr. John C.H. Lin
  Faculty of Architecture
Speakers from HKU (con’t):

Dr. Terry Y.S. Lum
Faculty of Social Sciences

Dr. Mirana May Szeto
Faculty of Arts

Prof. Agnes F.Y. Tiwari
Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine

Ms. Amanda Whitfort
Faculty of Law

Prof. Paul S.F. Yip
Faculty of Social Sciences

Dr. Yanfeng Zheng
Faculty of Business and Economics

Poster Presenters from HKU:

Dr. Kam Pui Chow
Faculty of Engineering

Dr. Chun-Hung Chu
Faculty of Dentistry

Prof. Ali Farhoomand
Faculty of Business and Economics

Ms. Tris Kee
Faculty of Architecture

Dr. Henry Y.K. Lau
Faculty of Engineering

Dr. Joe Y.F. Lau
Faculty of Arts

Prof. Yu-Lung Lau
Faculty of Medicine

Prof. Victor O.K. Li
Faculty of Engineering

Prof. Yunguo Li
Faculty of Engineering

Prof. Connie S.H. Ho
Faculty of Social Sciences

Dr. Dorothy F.P. Ng
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