

President, Honorable Guest, Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am much honored to be elected President of the Hong Kong Library Association for the Year 2001. I like to declare that I am prepared to serve the best interest of the Association and make every effort to further its future development.

As a professional association, HKLA has a history of more than 40 years. Today, librarians are increasingly recognized as a facilitator in the Information Age. Not only academic libraries, but also public libraries, non-profit organizations, companies and schools all recruit qualified librarians to take up the library and information work. I should say that our professional community is proliferating each day. HKLA, as the network for our profession, has been active in sponsoring and organizing various activities. Firstly, I would emphasize that the new Council is committed to continue with what we have done before and strive for more achievements next year.

What is our vision for the future? How can the profession's interests be best served? I would like to begin with the strengthening of our professional image. It is admitted that there have been a lot of misconceptions on our profession, especially from the general public. The most important reason is that most users cannot see behind the front-line operation. Several months ago, when making a comment on the re-deployment of language teachers, a senior official from the Education Department made the same mistake. We all have strong feelings against such misconceptions. But have we done enough to cultivate a high profile in our society? I strongly believe that we should make an up front promotion of our profession. I sincerely hope that librarians can be generally acknowledged as good partners with our clients and can provide value-added functions in the Information or the Internet Age.

Talking about the Internet, librarians have been using information technology to enhance our services. At the same time, IT helps to tie up the professional community and foster a stronger relationship among ourselves. In the past, a lot of librarians, especially those working in special libraries, were working in isolation. They had to face various challenges alone. When they were hard pressed by tremendous workload, they might not find a good way to share their feeling or frustration with others in the same profession. Today, however, with email and Internet access, librarians not only can equip ourselves with effective information tools, but also can share our working experience, the joy and excitement of our work with colleagues across the world. The HKLA website was undergoing a major revamp this year. It has become a good starting point for professional

communication. I believe that we should continue to improve the HKLA website and make it an active forum for sharing and exchanging information and views in our professional community.

I would also like to talk about another dimension of HKLA's future development. It is generally accepted that Hong Kong has a special role to play in the context of the Greater China. Most people will consider Hong Kong a window for the Chinese Mainland. We can help people in the Mainland to know and understand the outside world. Up till now, the contact and communication between HKLA and the professional bodies and library institutions in the Mainland are not too frequent. As far as I can remember, we just organized a few library visits to China. There lacks a formal channel of exchange between us and our counterparts in Macau, Guangdong or even at the national level. I believe that the Association can be proactive in establishing a connection with professional bodies in our region. By doing so, we can find a new role for HKLA in the overall development of librarianship in China.

It is not an easy task to form a Council. I have approached many colleagues in different types of libraries and invited them to join us. Most of them said to me that they were interested in accepting the challenge but as they were having too much work in hand, they could not spare the time to take up extra duties. I fully understand their constraints because nowadays we are obliged to do more with less. After much effort, finally, we managed to form a very good team. In addition, the Council next year will be well represented by different types of libraries, academic, public, special non-profit, commercial and school libraries. Although some of you cannot spare the time to serve in the Council, it would be the greatest reward for us if you continue to show up in the forthcoming events. Please also bring along colleagues and friends with you who happen not to know what HKLA is and what services it provides.

With your strong support and blessing, I can see a wide and straight path ahead of us. Thank you.