



# HKLA Newsletter Special Supplement

# Trip to Beijing

## Hong Kong Library Association

### Sightseeing, eating, etc.

The HKLA organized a tour to Beijing to visit prominent libraries there from 14 to 18 May. So great was the attraction of the capital and its famous libraries that registration was full within 24 hours — a record for HKLA events in recent history. A total of 24 participants joined the tour, visiting five libraries and one archive in two days. These included the National Library of China [國家圖書館], Peking University Library [北京大學圖書館], Tsinghua University Library [清華大學圖書館], the First Historical Archive of China [第一歷史檔案館], and the Library of the Chinese Academy of Sciences [中國科學院圖書館], the Capital Library [首都圖書館]. (Please see the separate reports in this supplement for details.)



### To make participants feel that this was not any ordinary trip, we racked our brains planning an itinerary that offered the unexpected.

Like trips of previous years, apart from the two days of library visits, we also did a bit of everything tourists do in the capital: sightseeing, shopping and eating at famous and unusual restaurants. Planning for this part of the trip was challenging, as most participants had visited Beijing before. To make participants feel that this was not any ordinary trip, we racked our brains planning an itinerary that offered the unexpected. Visits to the Palace Museum and Great Wall were out. Instead, we began our tour with a visit to Prince Gong's Palace [恭王府], the former residence of the notorious He Shen [和珅] before his downfall. We were awestruck by the size and elaborate decorations of the buildings and garden of the residence, as well as the extent of the greed of He Shen as measured by the storage areas that he

used to stash his ill-gotten wealth through bribery. To ensure that we would have a smooth way ahead in our career, we all climbed up the long walkway that was specially built to symbolize an ascent of the successful scholar official.

We also took a *hutong* pedicab ride [胡同遊] through the labyrinth of old alleyways in old Beijing.

It was a tour that enabled us to see and hear the history of Beijing's traditional vernacular architecture. Our caravan of a dozen or so pedicabs snaking through the *hutongs* must have been an amusing sight. Being highly educated professionals, we of course had to pay homage to the Imperial College [國子監]<sup>1,3</sup> and the Temple of Confucius [孔廟]<sup>2</sup>. There, a knowledgeable guide gave us an introduction to the history of the Imperial College, the civil service examination system and imperial lectures. There was an exhibition of paraphernalia used



HKLA Newsletter

Special Supplement,  
2005

### Inside:

National Library	4
Peking University	5
Tsinghua University	6
Chinese Academy of Sciences	8
First Historical Archive	10
Capital Library	11



in the examination system, the most amusing being the exhibits showing how students cheated, for example by passing minuscule characters by stuffing them into wigs and undergarments.

Amongst the many famous temples in Beijing, we visited the White Cloud Temple [白雲觀]<sup>4</sup>. This is the largest Taoist architectural complex in Beijing and was the headquarters for the Dragon Gate sect. We also visited the famous Grand View Garden [大觀園]<sup>5</sup>. Built in 1988, this magnificent garden is a replica of the garden of the same name depicted in the world-renowned classic Chinese novel *Dream of the Red Chamber* [紅樓夢]. Its five courtyards,

**It was a tour that enabled us to see and hear the history of Beijing's traditional vernacular architecture.**



three parks, Buddhist temple, rockeries and large lake make up 40 scenic spots representing the plot highlights. It's a great way to relive the novel.

From previous experience, we knew that most participants were keen shoppers, and some came armed with long shopping lists for Chinese medicine, tailor-made Chinese cloths, arts and crafts, and anything else you can think of. A visit to the famous shopping districts at

Wangfujing [王府井], Dazhalan [大柵欄]<sup>6</sup> and Liulichang [琉璃廠] was obviously a must.

HKLA trips are famous for the meals organized for participants. This time was no exception, and we made bookings at restaurants which each offered beautiful decor in which to savour exquisite cuisine. Our first meal after touching down in Beijing was at a farm-style restaurant [蟹島度假村開飯樓] near the airport where we

had a “peasant lunch” [農家宴]<sup>8</sup>. The restaurant is part of a big resort which has

working farms that supply fresh produce straight to the kitchen. This restaurant billed itself on its website as a real farmhouse-style restaurant, inclusive of a mule working the mill out front. We were a bit disappointed that this famous mule was taking the day off when we visited, but we were more than satisfied with the delicious servings of country vegetables and meat.

That first day ended with a sumptuous “executive dinner” [商務套餐] at a beautiful restaurant [天地一家] which was a remodeled courtyard residence [四合院] located inside Changpuhe Garden [菖蒲河公園] next to the Forbidden City. The centre of the dining hall of the restaurant was dominated by a ceiling decorated with traditional Chinese umbrellas and a raised platform surrounded by beautifully carved statues and a flowing canal<sup>7</sup>. The restaurant serves probably the best traditional dessert [豌豆黃] in Beijing.

At the Grand View Garden [大觀園], we savoured the famous “banquet of the Dream of the Red Chamber” [紅樓宴]<sup>9</sup>, with dishes cooked as in the novel. The table was grand and the dishes were delicious — each was announced and described by a lady in Qing court costume. We also had a special dinner cum show at a restaurant called Dazhaimen [大宅門], which served “cuisine fit for grand residences” [宅門菜]. We were lucky to have a stage-side table with a good view of the



**After five days, our 24 participants returned to Hong Kong with their minds brimming with thoughts on the libraries they had visited and on the warm hospitality of their hosts**

Peking opera, acrobats and “changing faces” [變臉]. Unfortunately, the organized dinners had to end at some point. For this, fittingly, we arranged for participants to have the “national dinner” [國宴] at the restaurant Wumingju [無名居]. There we enjoyed memorable dishes typically served to dignitaries at national banquets. We mustn't forget, of course, the lunches and dinners provided by our generous library hosts. It was lovely food with the warmest and friendliest of company, and we heartily thank them for their enthusiastic welcome and kind hospitality.

The last day of the trip was a free day for all, and participants took the opportunity to make some more visits to libraries of their choice, meet up with friends, spend their last Renminbi or visit places off the beaten track, perhaps an old Peking opera house<sup>10</sup>. The most memorable and moving event witnessed by some of the

participants might have been the raising of the national flag in Tiananmen Square to the national anthem at the crack of dawn (4:57a.m.).

After five days, our 24 participants returned to Hong Kong with their minds brimming with thoughts on the libraries they had visited and on the warm hospitality of their hosts, their bags bulging with souvenirs and gifts, and their bellies slightly larger from an excess of irresistible Beijing cuisine.

So where to next? Those who enjoyed this trip and those who missed it, please email your suggestions for our next out-of-town trip to [hkla@hkla.org](mailto:hkla@hkla.org).

*Lucinda Wong*

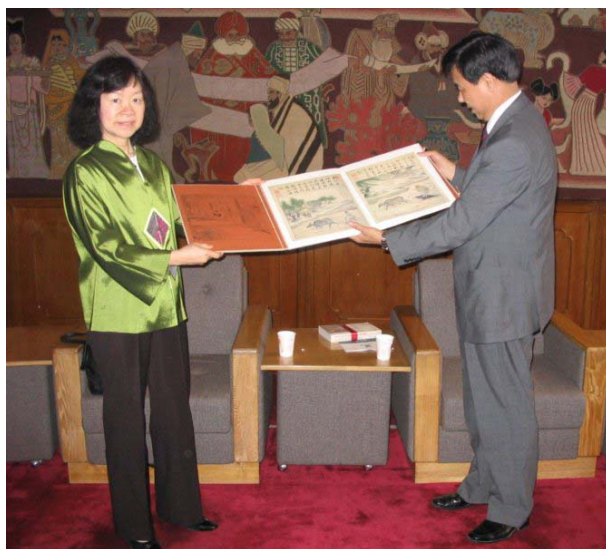


## National Library of China 中國國家圖書館

On the morning of 16 May, the HKLA delegation visited the National Library of China (NLC). We were welcomed by Dr. Zhan Fu-ruì [詹福瑞], Director of the NLC and Deputy Executive Director of the China Society for Library Studies (CSLS) [中國圖書館學會]. Accompanying him was Ms Tang Geng-shen [湯更生], Secretary General of CSLS.

Dr. Zhan vividly described the NLC's development over the years, its collections, and its services. We learnt that the NLC can be dated back to 1909, when its predecessor, the Capital Library [京師圖書館], was established by the Qing dynasty. Today, the NLC is a comprehensive research library, a national repository of Mainland China publications, a national bibliographic center, a national center of library information networks and digital libraries, and a library research and development center. The NLC serves the central legislature, the government, key research institutions, educational institutions, businesses, and the general public.

The library currently has a total floor area of 170,000 square meters, and an impressive collection of over 24,500,000 volumes. Phase II of the NLC is now being built next door to the existing building. Phase II will have



floor space of 77,687 square meters, which will be used to house the National Digital Library and an additional collection of 14,000,000 volumes.

During our meeting, the President of Hong Kong Library Association, Ms Julia Chan, also briefed the host on the history and new developments of the HKLA. The two parties exchanged views on the promotion of information literacy and reading, the enhancement of library services, and how to cooperate more effectively at the IFLA level. To express our gratitude to the NLC and CSLS for their warm reception, Ms Chan presented a souvenir to Dr. Zhan at the close of the meeting. In return, Dr. Zhan presented a replica of the "Geng Zhi Tu" [耕織圖] (pictures of sowing and weaving) as a gift from the China Society for Library Studies to the Hong Kong Library Association.

Our visit concluded with a tour of the NLC, of which the highlight was a visit to the library's famous Rare Book Department. In the Department's display room, we experienced the brilliance of ancient Chinese civilization through an exhibition of world-class treasures from the NLC's collection, including its Dunhuang Materials [敦煌遺書], the Golden Treasure of Zhao City [趙城金藏], and the Yongle Encyclopedia [永樂大典].

Owen Tam

## Peking University Library 北京大學圖書館

It was a rainy day on 16 May and the coach carrying the HKLA delegation rolled slowly across the threshold of Peking University taking the group to their 2nd stop of the day's visit — Peking University Library.

Nothing seemed to have changed since the Fall of 2002 when I was sent to the library for a month-long staff exchange program — except that the older section of the building where the PKUL Cataloging Department and some other library units used to be housed was now closed for a major renovation.

The PKUL Deputy Director, Mr. Gao Zhuoxian [高倬賢] and Head of Information Services Department, Ms Zhang Chunhong [張春紅], were there to greet us and gave us a brief introduction to the history and structure of Peking University Library.

After the introduction, the HKLA group was split into two and the group I was in first went to visit the rare book section which holds 1,500,000 ancient items, including 170,000 items of rare books. Among them are more than 1,000 one-of-a-kind and rare treasures. The ancient collection ranks third among all libraries of China. The section also holds approximately 56,000 rubbings from inscriptions on ancient bronzes and stone tablets, which reflect many facets of ancient life and are of great value for research in ancient characters, calligraphy, and painting. They can also be used to supplement history books, and the collection now ranks first among all of China's academic libraries.

After admiring the priceless ancient collection in the rare book section, we were shown the latest technological advancement — the management center of the China Academic Library Information System (CALIS).

As everyone now knows, CALIS is China's nation-wide academic library consortium and the result of 211 Project under the leadership of the Ministry of Education of China. The National Management Centre of CALIS is at Peking University and was developed in two phases.

Phase I, spanned from 1995 to 2000, involved the construction of its information network and resources network. Phase I saw the building of its union catalogue of member libraries which now serves as the backbone for resource sharing in interlibrary loans and document delivery as well as sharing bibliographic data among its members.

Phase II started around 2001 and involved building the



China Academic Digital Library which aims to construct the largest academic digital library system to provide information services to all universities in China. Projects in phase II include building databases of electronic reserved books, full-text dissertations and theses, Chinese journal storage, and rare book digital library.

Our two-hour tour was over too soon, and we were behind schedule. We thanked our hosts for their hospitality and boarded our coach for our next destination.

*Annabelle Pau*

## Tsinghua University Library 清華大學圖書館



On 16 May 2005, a delegation of Hong Kong Library Association members visited Tsinghua University Library (TUL) as part of HKLA's Beijing trip. Professor Xue Fangyu [薛芳渝], the Director, and his staff gave us a very warm welcome and also a presentation on the collections and services offered by the library, followed by a guided tour.

Tsinghua University Library is located almost at the heart of Tsinghua University, which is situated in several former Qing dynasty royal gardens that have inspired generations of students.



The library was established in 1912 and has been extensively developed over the years. In 1946, when the university, with nationwide restructuring, was molded into a polytechnic institution, acquisition for the collection focused on engineering and science. The scope of the collection was broadened in 1978, when the departments in sciences, economics and management, and the humanities were re-established.

In 1991, with the generous contribution of Dr Run Run Shaw, a new library with modern facilities was built, opening a new era for the Tsinghua University Library.

Presently, TUL occupies an area of 28,000 square meters and accommodates a rich collection of about 3 million volumes of books and bound journals,



4,000 current serials. The library subscribes to over 30,000 e-journals and 200 databases covering the humanities, social sciences and management with a strong emphasis on science, engineering and technology.

The library has made impressive technological advances. Since 1998, TUL has joined other academic libraries in China to form a consortium to purchase electronic resources. And to facilitate efficient access to the databases by authorized users in China, TUL has set up mirror-site service for large databases such as Elsevier Science, Ei Village, IEL, CSA, FirstSearch, and China Journal Net.



Substantial progress has been made in recent years in computer and networking technology. CERNET (China Education and Research Network) was established at Tsinghua University and includes ten regional network centres set up in different parts of China. It is linked to international networks and provides a powerful infrastructure for Chinese universities and schools for education, research and other applications.

Tsinghua University is also the center for Engineering and Technology in China's 211 Project-CALIS (China Academic Libraries Information System), which is a resource network based on CERNET providing Internet resources sharing for China and other countries. Its aim is to improve higher education in China and modernize academic libraries in the 21st century.

On digitization, TUL participates in the Million Book Project with libraries in the U.S. to digitize rare collections

in Chinese libraries and make them freely available on the Web to anyone at any time.

It also participates in the EMANI project, a co-operational system of four libraries (Cornell University Library, State and University Library Goettingen, Tsinghua University Library and Orsay Library) and content providers (Springer-Verlag, Birkhaeuser Verlag, Teubner Verlag, Vieweg Verlag and ELibM in EMIS) which aims to archive, preserve, and share access to digital mathematic resources.



After the Tsinghua University Library tour, we were treated to a delicious dinner in a unique guest house by a lily pond. The surrounding scenery, although hazy amidst light rain,

was fascinating. We enjoyed good food and pleasant exchanges with the library staff, and appreciated the hospitality of our host. All of us were impressed by the new developments at the Tsinghua University Library. It had been a very rewarding visit.

*Julia Chan*



## Library of the Chinese Academy of Sciences 中國科學館圖書館

The Hong Kong Library Association visited the Library of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (LCAS) on the morning of 17 May 2005. The Director, Dr. Zhang Xiaolin [張曉林], received us warmly, and gave us an informative overview of the history, missions, roles, structure, and current activities and projects of the LCAS. Ten staff of the LCAS were there to answer our questions. One of them, Dr. Mao Jun [毛軍], gave us a presentation on the Chinese National Science Digital Library (CSDL).

LCAS was established in April 1950. In just over 50 years, it has become a modern, public science and technology (S&T) documentation and information center that integrates programs of service, research and education, performing the functions of the National Science Library. It has now more than 270 staff: over 60% are senior professionals and 40 have MLS or doctoral degrees. LCAS is also one of the four doctoral degree granting institutes in library and information science in China. Graduate student courses have been offered for working librarians. There are about 60 MLS and doctoral degree candidates studying at LCAS each year.

In 2001, LCAS initiated the Chinese National Science Digital Library (CSDL) Project (the Project Management Center is located in LCAS), aiming at improving the overall information service of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS). Currently, CSDL provides 13 non-Chinese full-text databases, covering 2863 core journals, 6409 Western conference proceedings, and 9246 Chinese full-text S&T journals. With the e-key, CAS members gain free remote access to nearly 30 databases.

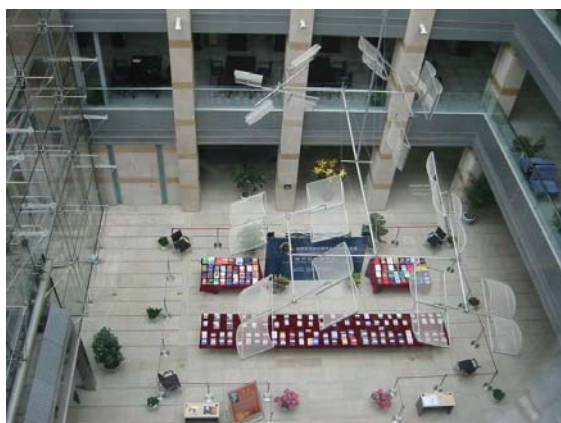
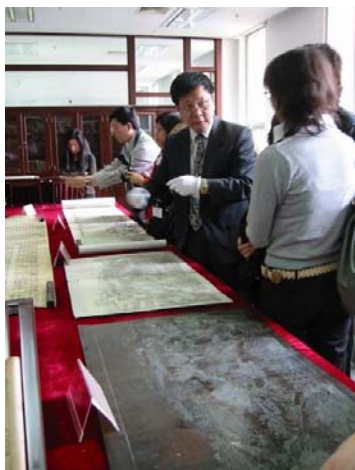
In print, LCAS houses 5,200,000 natural science and high-technology items — the most comprehensive and systematic collections in China.

The LCAS building is grand, with a total area of 40,900 square meters and 800 seats for users. It is only three years old. A unique feature of LCAS is that a large portion of the outer wall is made of transparent material that allows sunlight in, which makes it less dependent on the currently rather tight supply of electricity. LCAS has a large exhibition hall, and was staging the

Albert Einstein exhibition when HKLA visited. LCAS has adopted Innopac Millennium as its integrated library system.

LCAS is playing an active role in the S&T information sector, both locally and globally, as well as in research and education in the field of library and information science.

*Leung Yau-ching*



## First Historical Archive of China 第一歷史檔案館

One of the highlights of the Beijing trip was the visit to the First Historical Archives of China on 17 May. The Archives were established in 1925 as part of the Palace Museum Library. Formerly known as the Ming and Qing Section of the Central Archives [中央檔案館明清檔案部], the First Historical Archives is responsible for the preservation of government documents and imperial records of the Ming and Qing dynasty courts. Today it is under the State Archives Administration of China [國家檔案局].

The Archives is situated in the western part of the Forbidden City. After crossing a 52-metre-wide moat, we entered the Forbidden City's west gate or 'West Flowery Gate' [西華門], as it is known. In 1900, the Emperor Guangxu [光緒皇帝] and



Empress Dowager Cixi [慈禧太后] fled the palace through this gate as the Allies entered Beijing during the Boxer Rebellion. This part of the Forbidden City is not yet open to the public. Soldiers were watching at the gate and we were asked to queue up before entering.

The Archives building was constructed in 1975. A staff member led us to the exhibition hall, where a knowledgeable officer introduced to us the holdings and offered a story about each item on display. According to the inventory, the First Historical Archives contains in total some 13 million items, around 3,000 of which are from the Ming court. This vast and diversified collection of historical documents spans more than 500 years and includes records related to sacrificial ceremonies, military, diplomacy, agriculture, defense, education, budget and finance, and various activities of the imperial family.

In the exhibition hall, we saw the golden announcement [金榜] — a graded list of successful examination candidates. Examination results determined whether one could become a government official, essentially deciding the career of most intellectuals in the past. On view was some correspondence between emperors and officials [奏摺]. We learnt that the Qing court had established an archival system which required local officials to return all written commands from emperors once a year. We saw the original marriage certificate or appointment [莊妃冊文] of the

Empress Xiaozhuang [孝莊皇后], issued in 1636, written in Chinese, Manchu and Mongolian. An item like this is not merely a record, as it can be appreciated for its calligraphy or its elegant embroidery.

The "jade registers" [玉牒] in the Archives are genealogical records of the imperial family. They are not actually made of jade. Rather the word "jade" is used to signify the preciousness of these records. Among the several repositories in the Archives building, we were only able to visit the repository of jade registers [玉牒館]. The repository contains 86 huge wooden cabinets, where all registers were kept. The cabinets are made of fragrant wood and engraved on all six sides with dragons. The jade registers are traditional Chinese thread-bound books wrapped in silk. A single register can be as large as a library book truck, with as many as ten thousand pages and weighing more than hundred kilograms.

The exhibition also included imperial orders, diplomatic correspondence, municipal reports, military maps, banknotes, bank drafts, records of emperors' daily activities and meals, and detailed medical records.

All this made the visit a truly eye-opening experience.

Sintra Tsang



## Capital Library 首都圖書館



strong financial support it receives from the municipal government of Beijing. It achieved a major milestone with the opening of the new library building in 2001. With a total area of 38,000 square meters, the library is regarded as the second largest in Beijing, next to the National Library of Beijing. Acting as the de facto central library, it leads the public libraries in the city and plays an important role in assisting and developing the public library network in 20 suburban districts and counties.

The eight-storey library holds more than 3.5 million items, with 17 thematic reading rooms and 12,000 seats open to the general public.

Its services include Lending collections, the Beijing Local Information, Historical Documents, Cultural Services, User Education and Training, Information Services, Magazines and Newspapers, Information Network Management, and Exhibition and Conference services.

When we visited the Capital Library late in the afternoon on 17 May, the grandeur of the building helped lift our fatigue from the day's busy schedule. Officially opened on May 1, 2001, the building is shaped like a wide-open book, embodying the wealth of human knowledge and spiritual thought. We were further cheered by the reception given us by Mr. Han Pu [韓樸], Deputy Director, and his team of librarians. Mr. Han then gave a fascinating, detailed presentation of the library's long and complicated history and its recent developments.



Mr. Han gave us a tour of a number of reading rooms. The Beijing Local Information Center holds the depository collection of more than 40,000 items about Beijing. Based on these resources, the Center is responsible for developing a notable digital initiative, Beijing Memory [北京記憶]. The Historical Documents Center houses 42,000 rare books, 100,000 books published during the period of the Republic of China (1912–1949), 5,000 rubbings and 2,000 Chinese paintings.

Founded by Lu Xun [魯迅] as the Metropolitan Popular Library [京師通俗圖書館] in 1913, the library was moved to the Imperial Academy [國子監] beside Toufa alley [頭發胡同] near Xuanwumen Gate [宣武門] in 1924; then to Xihuamen [西華門] in 1953; and finally, in 1956, to its present site, southeast of Andingmen Gate [安定門]. At that time, it was also renamed as the 'Capital Library' and is now under the administration of the Beijing Municipal Cultural Bureau.



Comparable to the Shanghai Library, the Capital Library is the largest public library in Beijing because of the



Being run as a pilot project since September 2003, Beijing Memory is a multimedia database on Beijing history and culture in different formats, including books, historical photographs, maps, sound recordings, and motion pictures.

There are five online collections: Publications about Beijing [北京文匯], Pictorial Collection of Old Beijing [舊京圖典], Arts Collection [京華舞台], Beijing Research Studies [北京研究], and Beijing Folk-Custom Seminar [鄉土課程]. More than 300 titles and over 10,000 photographs have been digitized and made full-text searchable. The digitization project is a worthy attempt to collect,

preserve, and provide access to this rich collection of digitized documents.

During our one and an half hours at the library, Mr. Han enabled us to learn a great deal by answering all of our many questions. We left deeply impressed with the collection, the digital resources and the technology at the library. Walking out of the main entrance, we looked back at rejuvenated Capital Library with admiration. The library is not only modern in its outlook; it is also rich in the kind of resources that make one want to return for repeated exploration and discovery.

*Sandra Mow*

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