Focus

CityU website scrolls with the times

By Irene Lau

A new CityU website design with an emphasis on strong branding and well-organised content was launched on 12 August, featuring attractive photo stories, new multimedia platforms and links to the dedicated video-sharing website CityUtube.

CityU’s online presence has already undergone several revisions since its arrival in 1995. You may well have come across some past versions that reflect the different styles of website layout and University focus over the years.

The new homepage is the result of the strenuous efforts of colleagues from a range of departments over many months. They conducted random-sampling surveys with colleagues and students, referenced the website designs of various leading universities and examined the expected functions of the product. Finally, a brand image that embodies CityU’s characteristics of a “young, energetic, dynamic, friendly and approachable” institution was determined, with the three brand colours, blue, green and orange, encapsulating the vibrant new design of the homepage.

Dr Jerry Yu Jer-tsang, Chief Information Officer cum chief architect of the newly-designed homepage, pointed out that the advancement of computer technology had made it possible to project much richer colours and benefit from improved screen resolutions and faster internet transmission. While retaining its major functions, the University’s new homepage has incorporated multimedia technology and introduced attractive photo stories.

“Webistes today should not merely serve as a tool for internal communication. In developing our new homepage, we are more image-conscious about design and needed to have our content reorganised and well-categorised. The new layout will be one of the first mediums to project the institute’s image to the external community and as such is a very important promotional platform of CityU’s brand,” said Dr Yu.

To enable a smooth launch of the new homepage, it was vital to have the technical support of the Computing Services Centre.

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“Our relationship with webpage designers is very much like the one between architects and structural engineers,” said Ms Maria Chin Po-mon, Systems Manager. “They have brilliant design ideas but don’t know exactly how it works in the system.” Ms Chin and her colleagues met with the designers many times to discuss details such as the colours and fonts, resolution and page margins as they sought a balance between appearance and practicality.

The new homepage has incorporated web2.0 functions such as multimedia and RSS site summary. With just one click to subscribe to CityU news, users can save themselves the trouble of checking the site every day. Instead, the system will direct a news summary to subscribers’ workstations to keep them updated on the latest happenings at CityU.

In order to present a consistent CityU image, while retaining the individual characteristics of different departments, the Computing Services Centre has developed a Style Guide based on the new homepage design for colleagues’ reference: http://www.cityu.edu.hk/csc/deptweb/services/internet/web-hosting/WebStyleManual.pdf.

1  circa 1995
2  1997/98
3  circa early 2000
4  circa January 2006

On the right track

By Longgen Chen

Chair Professor Ron Chen Guanrong took an unusual path before he got onto the right academic track.

Deprived of a chance to receive any college education during the “Cultural Revolution”, Professor Ron Chen of the Department of Electronic Engineering taught himself mathematics for about ten years while working on the farm. He was admitted as the second highest candidate into the graduate school of Sun Yat-sen (Zhongshan) University in Guangzhou in 1978. He graduated with an MSc Degree in computational mathematics in 1981, before going on to the USA and receiving a PhD degree in applied mathematics from Texas A&M University in 1987.

Thereafter he worked at Rice University and the University of Houston until he came to City University of Hong Kong as a chair professor in 2000.

Professor Chen’s main research pursuit is in engineering-nonlinear systems control and dynamics. He is the founding director of the Centre for Chaos and Complex Networks and has received numerous awards, the most recent of which was the 2008 second-class award under the State Natural Science Award in recognition of his achievements and contributions in the field of chaos theory, especially the discovery of the now-famous “Chen System.”
Professor prefers green to greed

By Fiona Lo

To protect the environment, the Hong Kong SAR government introduced a territory-wide plastic bag tax in July. But how much do we really know about environmental protection? "Many people think saving energy is equivalent to environmental protection. However, only when eco-products are used for energy saving can we really help protect the environment," said Chair Professor Ron Hui Shu-yuen. "For example, although the energy-saving bulbs that we commonly use can reduce power consumption, they have a short life-span and will become non-degradable toxic materials after being discarded. Large quantities of such toxic materials piled up in landfill sites contaminate the soil, with damaging implications for future generations."

Living abroad for 17 years, Professor Hui has taught at overseas higher education institutions including the University of Nottingham in United Kingdom and the University of Sydney in Australia. In 1996, he returned to Hong Kong and joined CityU’s Department of Electronic Engineering and chaired the University’s Power Electronics and Drives Research Group. He pointed out that local studies revealed the major source for Hong Kong’s air and environmental pollution actually originates from the territory, rather than neighbouring mainland regions as some have claimed. Also, the increasing number of electronic products on the market will undoubtedly generate a large quantity of electronic waste.

With an ardent interest in electronic engineering, Professor Hui focuses on inventing environmentally-friendly products. His distinguished research achievements are exemplified by the 44 patents awarded to his inventions. "The power chargers for our mobile phones easily become electronic waste due to our frequent changes to new models. Last year alone, 1.2 billion power chargers were produced by mobile phone manufacturers worldwide," said Professor Hui. To address this issue, he has invented a new power charging plate that suits most of the popular mobile phone models. As the new invention is a substitute for individual power chargers, it can significantly reduce the quantity of electronic waste.

Beyond the scope of electronic research work, Professor Hui enjoys an admirable life. As an avid swimmer, he starts his day at CityU’s swimming pool for a 1,500 metre swim three or four times a week. "Returning to Hong Kong, I feel regret that the water quality of most beaches in the territory is not suitable for swimming. It’s sad to see the blue sky that I was familiar with in the past has now turned to grey most of the time," he said.

Professor Hui serves the community by utilising his expertise to conduct research and tests for the Hong Kong Consumer Council, for which he acts as a spokesperson. As a Christian, he visits Stanley Prison twice a month to talk to the prisoners.

“They are Class-B prisoners with the longest sentence of 12 years. To my surprise, many of them were elites of society in the past who had worked as lawyers, chairmen of public-listed companies or senior government officials," said Professor Hui. "I learned a moral from those prisoners: people who hanker after things they don’t deserve can be knowledgeable but unwise individuals. For those who are already well-off but still not contented can easily go astray and fall into the trap of greediness.”
University staff look for a smart investment

By Eliza Lee

The recent financial tsunami has undermined the confidence of many investors. One of the refuges sought by nervous market observers has been the back-to-basics savings account.

Dr Cheng Lee-ming, Associate Professor at the Department of Electronic Engineering, is an investment veteran who has also altered his strategy since the financial tsunami. “With the market still very volatile amid prevailing uncertainty, there are tremendous risks for general investors,” said Dr Cheng.

Representing CityU’s Teachers Union, Dr Cheng met representatives of other local universities last year to set up the University Credit Union (UCU) to promote savings among local universities. The UCU was formed in July 2008 and began its public operations in April and now boasts 100 members. “The Union aims to adopt a prudent strategy to generate returns for members. It also provides a platform for staff in different institutions to get to know each other,” said Dr Cheng, Director and Assistant Treasurer of the UCU.

UCU members can determine their own monthly savings plan, from a minimum $100 up to 50% of their monthly salary, according to their own financial situation. Dr Cheng said, “By accumulating members’ contributions, the Union can bargain with banks for a better interest rate. We use 70% of the capital for low-risk investment, for example, fixed deposits and bonds. The annual profit is distributed as dividends to members, with a possible return of 6%.” According to the data provided by the Credit Union League of Hong Kong, the average return rate among all credit unions last year was 3.5%. As the UCU only started its operation this April, there has not yet been an annual dividend distributed to members. Given the current adverse investment environment, Dr Cheng estimated the eventual return from UCU should be satisfactory.

Credit unions not only encourage members to save but also help them with loans. The current maximum loan amount from the UCU is $100,000 and the interest rate is fixed at 1% per month according to the Credit Union Ordinance. As the interest rate is calculated by a reducing balance method, borrowers pay much less interest to the UCU than other money lenders. Dr Cheng explained, “With its simple borrowing procedures and absence of service charges, the UCU will be able to help members in urgent need of cash.”

“The Union aims to adopt a prudent strategy to generate returns for members. It also provides a platform for staff in different institutions to get to know each other.”

In addition to promoting mutual trust between members, the UCU also holds social activities. “I met a member during an event and found that our children are studying in the same school, so we had a lot to chat about,” Dr Cheng said.

With a lengthy track record of 45 years in Hong Kong, credit unions have been set-up in government departments, private organisations, parish churches and local communities. In terms of membership, the UCU may have the widest potential market, as all full-time staff employed more than six months in any local higher education institutions are eligible to apply for membership. “The UCU has tremendous potential for development, as we have an estimated 20,000 qualified members or more. Our internet system is now under construction, which can allow members to check their shares online in the future,” said Dr Cheng.

Further details can be found at the University Credit Union website: http://www.hkcreditunion.org/ucu/
By Zoey Tsang

Among some 50 colleagues joining CityU this summer, more than 40 are scholars from around the world, including the mainland, US, Australia, Canada and Singapore. Linkage spoke to two of the new international members of the CityU fraternity.

Dr Jackie Lou Jia, a native of Shanghai, just joined the Department of English in July as an Assistant Professor. She is no stranger to CityU, having graduated and received her bachelor degree from the University.

Dr Lou came to Hong Kong in 2000 to study CityU’s Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in English for Professional Communication programme, which proved a gateway to the world. After graduation, she pursued further studies at Georgetown University in the US and successfully completed her PhD degree in social linguistics.

“It is very exciting to return to CityU and work in such a multi-faceted organisation,” said Dr Lou. When asked about how her feelings towards her alma mater may have changed in the intervening six years, she said, “My role has changed. I was a student then, learning a lot from the University’s professors and instructors. Now as their colleague, I wish to be able to pass my knowledge to students.”

As a mainland student who studied in Hong Kong, Dr Lou pays close attention to mainland students now at CityU. “I try to ensure they get the most from the opportunity of studying in Hong Kong,” she said.

In the new academic year, Dr Lou will teach world English and pragmatics and will continue her research on social linguistics.

Ms Sabine Pauli from Germany joined the Division of Building Science and Technology in January as an instructor. Before coming to Hong Kong with her husband three years ago, Sabine was already a registered architect in Germany and had many years experience in architectural design and teaching.

Although she has lived in Hong Kong for only three years and joined the University just one semester ago, she has fallen in love with the “City”. “I have encountered many new challenges since coming to Hong Kong. CityU has more students in a class than the institutions I taught in Europe. I had to adjust my teaching methods and revise my teaching materials. However, CityU students are very smart, creative, good at expressing themselves and able to digest large volumes of information in a very short time.” She keeps track of the latest building industry developments so as to relay the latest information and technology to her students.

Sabine’s plan for the new academic year was to start her research and continue studying Putonghua. “I have only been learning it for a year and it isn’t easy but I’ll keep trying.”
1 How did you and your family spend your summer holiday?
今年的暑假，你和家人是怎样度過的？

1 I went to Beijing with my family to absorb the pleasant mood left in the wake of the 2008 Olympics. We also saw a lot of movies as there were so many good ones this summer.
我與家人到北京旅遊，去感受2008年奧運留下的喜悅。我們也看了很多電影，因為今年暑假上映的出色作品實在太多了。

2 I would go with my family to Japan to witness the latest technology and know-how.
我會與家人到日本旅行，體驗新知識和新科技。

3 My wife and I had the novel idea one summer to travel around all the places in Hong Kong. In the subsequent weeks we boarded any buses going around without a particular plan. We found it very interesting and discovered many long-forgotten local places.
我和太太在一個夏天萌生了遊覽香港各地的點子。在接下來的數星期，我們搭了任何巴士遊走不同的地方。我們發現香港原來有很多久被遺忘的寶藏。

2 None that I can think of. I am waiting for one!
我想不出一個難忘的暑假！我現在正等待一個難忘的暑假！

3 I sold vegetables in supermarkets in the summer holiday before entering university. After that, I dreaded shopping at supermarkets and the phobia lasted for at least one year. That smell of the supermarkets made me throw up.
我暑假前在超市賣蔬菜，之後我非常害怕去超市買東西，這種恐懼至少持續了一整年。超市的氣味讓我作嘔。

4 We went to Provence to visit this beautiful part of southern France and enjoyed a walk in the lavender fields during early summer.
我們去了普羅旺斯，遊歷法國南部美麗的地區，初夏時節在長滿薰衣草的田野漫步。

2 Having no limitations, I would like to take a trip to the moon!
假如無任何限制的話，我想到月球旅行。

3 Took a driving trip in Hokkaido for a week with five family members, enjoyed delicious seafood, cozy onsen hotels and colourful fields of flowers.
某年夏日，一家六人在日本北海道開車遊歷了一星期，享受美味的海鮮，舒適的溫泉旅館，還有五彩繽紛的鮮花田野。

4 Spent a month in Paris taking a summer programme with the Parsons School of Design.
在巴黎一個月，修讀帕森設計學院的夏日攝影課程。

Mr Remus Kwok Kai-chun
Mr Frankie Fan Tse-ki
郭啟晉先生
范子祺先生
Department of Applied Social Studies
應用社會科學系
Knowledge Transfer Office
知識轉移處
Education Development Office
教育發展處

Ms Eliza Chan Chong-lai
陳莊麗女士
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Mr Frankie Fan Tse-ki
范子祺先生
Education Development Office
教育發展處

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A few minutes with...

Wong Wing-sum
黃永森
Clerical Officer, Department of Chinese, Translation and Linguistics
中文、翻譯及語言學系文員

Q When did you start working at CityU?  何時加入城大？
A October 2008.  2008年10月。

Q Describe yourself in three words. 可否用三個詞語形容你自己？
A Sincere, reasonable and trustworthy. 誠懇、講理、可靠。

Q What is the best aspect of your job? 對工作哪一部份最感滿意？
A All my colleagues are very helpful. 同事樂於助人。

Q If you could spend a week in the shoes of HKSAR Chief Executive Donald Tsang, what would you try to achieve? 假如你有機會穿一星期的香港特首之紐鞋，你會做些甚麼？
A To spend the public funds wisely. 明智使用公帑。

Q Do you play sport? If so, what? 有否做運動？若有，甚麼運動？
A Badminton. 羽毛球。

Q What book is on your bedside table? 你的床頭櫃上，放的是甚麼書物？
A Research on Chinese Grammar in Hong Kong. 《香港粵語語法的研究》。

Q What kind of food do you like most at home? 最喜歡的家常菜？
A Honey chicken wings. 炸雞翅。

Q Do you have a favourite restaurant to recommend? 可否推薦一家你心愛的餐廳？
A Outback Steakhouse.

Q If you could take a CityU course outside your own college/school, what would it be? 你會選甚麼科？
A Arbitration and Dispute Resolution. 仲調及爭議解決學。

Q What one music album/CD would you have with you if stranded on a desert island? 假若在孤島上，你會選擇哪一張唱片作伴？
A Heal the world.

Q If you could be a superhero, who would it be? 假若你能成為一個超級英雄，你想成為哪一位？
A Bruce Lee. 李小龍。

Q Describe your perfect holiday. 甚麼樣的假期最完美？
A Idling at home. 在家裏無所事事。

Q What was the first paying job you ever had? 第一份工做甚麼？
A Salesperson. 售貨員。

Q How do you unwind away from work? 工作之餘，如何紓解壓力？
A Sleep. 睡覺。