

Remarks from UGC

by

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It is my pleasure to be here today to join the E-Book Conference, which also marks the 40th Anniversary Celebration of Joint University Librarians Advisory Committee (JULAC). On behalf of the University Grants Committee (UGC), I wish to extend our appreciation to the eight UGC-funded institutions' libraries in making the Electronic Resources Academic Library Link (ERALL) project a huge success.

Everyone here will agree that, nowadays, knowledge and information abound. The question is how we can use these enormous amount of resources efficiently and effectively. The UGC believes that deep collaboration among institutions is a key to achieve excellence and efficiency in deploying resources. We have encouraged institutions to come up with solutions by, for instance, giving funding support for institutions' proposals on deep collaborative activities.

In 2005, with UGC's funding support of \$10m from the Restructuring and Collaboration Fund (RCF), the Hong Kong Academic Library Link (HKALL) was successfully launched. It allows users at any libraries of the eight UGC-funded institutions to request books from sisters' institutions, and makes over 4 million items physically available in about two days. But, the momentum of collaboration has not stopped there. Today, we are here to witness another fruitful reward of commitment and collaboration of all institutions - the ERALL under the leadership of CityU and Professor Ching, and the commitment of other institutions.

Electronic journals are now highly acceptable and frequently used by almost every reader as they are essential for research, teaching and learning, in particular, e-learning. Electronic journals, given their quantity and quality, are no doubt making a significant impact on the university community. It has therefore become necessary for our institutions' libraries to build up a web-based E-book collection. Equally important, while all institutions are preparing themselves for the implementation of the new "3+3+4" academic structure, there are competing demands for campus space at institutions to cope with the expansion. ERALL provides a timely partial answer to all these questions. Not only does it provide a seamless and fast sharing of e-books among the university, but it also minimises duplication, thereby maximising the number of titles available and freeing up stacking and storage space for paper books in the libraries. The benefit of ERALL is certainly not confined to maximising titles and saving space. It can benefit students directly by supporting e-learning through remote access round-the-clock.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the participating libraries on the

success of ERALL, which marks a further level of collaboration among our institutions. I know that JULAC is also actively exploring another project – for a joint off-campus storage facility for all eight institutions to cope with the storage problem of growing volumes of library collections. This is a most welcome joint effort – and essential to allowing best use of very scarce library space on campus. The UGC has again indicated strong support and we are ready to assist in this process.

The theme of today's conference is about academic library E-book acquisition and use. JULAC has successfully brought us speakers and audience not just from Hong Kong but also from several other jurisdictions. This certainly presents our institutions with a valuable opportunity to exchange ideas and share experience.

May I wish all of you a successful and fruitful conference. Thank you.