

Research Assessment Exercise 2020

Impact Case Study

University: [The Education University of Hong Kong |

Unit of Assessment (UoA): [30 Chinese language & literature |

Title of case study: [The Compendium of Hong Kong Literature 1919-1949 |

(1) Summary of the impact

[This study describes the reception and impact of the project of *The Compendium of Hong Kong Literature 1919-1949* (*The Compendium*), reviewing the major cultural contributions of *The Compendium* made to the general public significantly beyond academia, including the local and overseas non-academic institutional and governmental recognitions, media coverage of all kinds, educational influence, and the huge reach the project created in its wealth of post-publication events held in a variety of venues in Hong Kong and overseas. The far-reaching impacts of *The Compendium* feature prominently in their contribution to cultural preservation, education, public memorialisation, regional cultural exchange, and tourism. |

(2) Underpinning research

[The idea of compiling a compendium of Hong Kong literature dates back to as early as the 1980s but was not materialised due to the lack of manpower and resource. In 2009, Prof Leonard Chan Kwok-kou and Dr Chan Chi-tak brought up the idea again, officially and systematically embarking on its realisation. Taking the *Compendia of Chinese New Literature* (Shanghai, 1935) as the prime predecessor, an editorial committee consisting of local literary specialists was subsequently formed and the project of “The Compendium of Hong Kong Literature” launched. In view of the daunting sea of literary works, the first series of the project as reported here focuses on the period of 1919-1949. The twelve-volume *Compendium* is a landmark in Hong Kong literary studies and a much-awaited showcase of Hong Kong literature as a body of literary works that should be considered in its own right.

The Compendium features both the reclaim and reconsideration of Hong Kong literature. While the editorial team managed to retrieve many neglected early literary works, the subsequent examination, selection and editing of the archival findings, as crystallised in the critical introductions by the individual editors in each of the twelve volumes, are equally important. Charting the history of the literature concerned by explaining the ideas and principles behind the selection process, these scholarly introductions offer guidance and invaluable historical information by remedying the past inaccurate accounts of Hong Kong literature. *The Compendium of Hong Kong Literature 1919-1949: A Collection of Introductory Essays*, a standalone book composed of these critical accounts of Hong Kong literature, was published in 2016, essentially complementing the selected literary works.

The General Introduction of the series by Prof Chan provides a concise history of literary compendium in the Chinese-speaking context as well as revealing insights into the unique case of Hong Kong literature. Taking into account the vastly different considerations of other compendia, *The Compendium* embraces a historically conscious editorial principle, establishing a more accommodating frame of reference for reading Hong Kong literature as lived experience by incorporating unprecedented voices of Hong Kong literature, as demonstrated in the three volumes dedicated respectively to Classical-Style Literature, popular literature and children literature. Also, recognising the inherently fluid and perpetually changing political and, more importantly, cultural boundary of Hong Kong, it eschews the common essentialist pitfall of fixating on “Hong Kong authors,” problematising instead the very definition of Hong Kong literature and opening up possibilities for inter-regional dialogue.

Apart from *The Compendium* itself, the new research opportunities generated by the wealth of resources from *The Compendium* can also be seen in *Re-encountering Hong Kong Literature*,

which brings together reflections of the editors of *The Compendium* as well as twenty-three local and overseas responses to *the Compendium*, showing its seminal and lasting influence.

Last, *The Compendium* will be followed by the second series of the project initiated in July 2017, *The Compendium of Hong Kong Literature 1950-1969*, which attests to the continuing commitment of the project towards the cultural preservation of Hong Kong. |

(3) References to the research

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- 5) Wong, Nim Yan, editor. *Compendium of Hong Kong Literature 1919-1949: Fiction II*. Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 2015.
- 6) Lo, Wai Luk, editor. *Compendium of Hong Kong Literature 1919-1949: Drama*. Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 2016.
- 7) Chan, Kwok Kou Leonard, editor. *Compendium of Hong Kong Literature 1919-1949: Literary Criticism I*. Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 2016.
- 8) Lin, Man Shu, editor. *Compendium of Hong Kong Literature 1919-1949: Literary Criticism II*. Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 2016.
- 9) Ching, Chung Shan, editor. *Compendium of Hong Kong Literature 1919-1949: Classical-Style Literature*. Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 2016.
- 10) Wong, Chung Ming, editor. *Compendium of Hong Kong Literature 1919-1949: Popular Literature*. Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 2016.
- 11) Fok, Yuk Ying, editor. *Compendium of Hong Kong Literature 1919-1949: Children Literature*. Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 2016.
- 12) Chan, Chi Tak, editor. *Compendium of Hong Kong Literature 1919-1949: Reference Materials*. Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 2016.
- 13) Chan, Kwok Kou Leonard et al. *The Compendium of Hong Kong Literature 1919-1949: A Collection of Introductory Essays*. Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 2016.
- 14) Chan, Kwok Kou Leonard, editor. *Re-encountering Hong Kong Literature*. Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 2018. |

(4) Details of the impact

Institutional Recognition

Highly favorable institutional assessments of *The Compendium*'s impacts abound. Apart from the funding from Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC), the 8th Hong Kong book prize from Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) won by *Modern Poetry* edited by Dr. Chan Chi Tak also affirms the quality of *The Compendium*. Furthermore, Prof Chan was awarded the HKADC 2016 "Artist of the Year" (Arts Criticism) prize in recognition of *The Compendium*: "[Chan] presented [in *The Compendium*] the multi-faceted historical outlook of Hong Kong literature that is comprehensible to the general public." *The Compendium* as a highly readable literary documentation is thus a true preservation of Hong Kong literature. Likewise, the second issue of the *Journal of Macau Studies* published by Macao Foundation of the Macau Government in 2017 refers to *The Compendium* as an ideal against which they benchmark their own publication, effectively ascertaining the profound cultural impact of *The Compendium* on an institutional level.

Public Reach

As of February 2017, the various volumes of *The Compendium* have sold 6,303 copies in total, over half of the first printing. To essentially further the public reach of the cultural preservation recovered by the project, a digital environment for the public access of the archival findings of *The Compendium* will be completed by 2021, while issues regarding directory and copyright of the collected manuscripts have now been largely addressed.

The documented media exposure of *The Compendium* has been huge, as seen in the proliferation of introductions and reviews of the work from local print media of all political and cultural orientations, among which include newspaper reports and magazine articles from *Apple Daily*, *Ming Pao*, *Sing Tao Daily*, *Tai Kung Pao*, *SCMP* and the leading Hong Kong online news website *Stand News*, attesting to the truly remarkable universal attention it receives. Print media from China such as *China Daily* and *Nanfang Metropolis Daily* also reported on *The Compendium*, showing its cross-regional influence. *The Compendium*'s exposure in the electronic media has been equally phenomenal, as shown in a television programme reviewing books from Phoenix Satellite Television as well as a radio programme on culture from RTHK. Significantly, the socially active barrister Laurence Li indicated in his financial column in *Mingpao* the lasting impact of *The Compendium* to the society of Hong Kong.

The project has also made a sustained effort to engage the public with various public activities, greatly enhancing the public appreciation of *The Compendium* and Hong Kong literature. Particularly, public seminars organised around *The Compendium*, whose cumulative number of participants is estimated to be no less than 1,000, have been consistently prolific, covering a wide variety of venues and collaborators, including, on a municipal level, Hong Kong Central Library, and, on an institutional level, Hong Kong Book Fair. The Commercial Press, the largest commercial Hong Kong bookstore, also organised a series of talks on *The Compendium*. Additionally, the House of Hong Kong Literature, a well-known community-based organisation in the local literary scene, also organised a public seminar introducing *New Poetry*, together enabling public memorialisation cutting across a full range of audience, many of whom state that *The Compendium* has essentially broadened their conception of Hong Kong literature, thanks to the groundbreaking exhibition of academically marginalised genres closely associated with the everyday life.

Educational Influence

Notably, a reporter of *Singtao* education section (Wong Fung Wan) mentioned that she learned of *The Compendium* and subsequently interviewed Prof. Chan, offering worksheet for students alongside the report, while another news report from *Singtao* parenting section considers *The Compendium* an ideal reference for secondary students. Moreover, prestigious Taiwan universities (NTU, NCTU) incorporated *The Compendium* into their teaching references, all attesting to its far-reaching influence on education.

Overseas Response

Deep interest in *The Compendium* is also shown among the overseas public. Prof. Chan gave two public seminars in Taiwan in 2016 and one in Richmond Public Library in 2018 on *The Compendium*, all met with great enthusiasm from the huge audience. Remarkably, the project will collaborate with National Museum of Taiwan Literature for a large-scale exhibition on its findings in early 2020 in Taiwan, while the preparatory work informed by the formulated curatorial principle is already well underway. Showcasing Hong Kong modern literature, the exhibition aims to engage the public in the Chinese-speaking region, shedding light on Hong Kong as a uniquely captivating cultural sphere. Significantly, the exhibition will also highlight the contextualisation and historicisation of Hong Kong literature, invoking the shared migration history vis-à-vis Chinese Civil War and opening up possibilities for cultural memorialisation, exchange and tourism.

(5) Sources to corroborate the impact

Institutional Recognition

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Non-academic Article

- 3) Chou, Oliver. "Shelf Preservation." *SCMP*. 1st September, 2014, <https://www.scmp.com/author/oliver-chou>
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Radio and TV Appearance

- 6) Ma Ka Fai. *Eight Minutes Reading* in Phoenix Satellite Television Programme. 16th October, 2014.
- 7) Chan, Kwok Kou Leonard and Chan Chi Tak. Radio Interview in *RTHK Radio 1* Programme *Jiang Dong Jiang Xi*. 3rd December, 2014.

Public Event

Hong Kong Central Library Events: "Monthly Literary Talks: Literary Hong Kong: Quest and Discovery."

- 8) Lo, Wai-luk. *The Growth of Hong Kong Drama: Opportunity and Nourishment*. 31st January, 2015, <https://www.hkpl.gov.hk/en/extension-activities/event-detail/70357/monthly-literary-talk-2015-literary-hong-kong-quest-and-discovery-january>
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- 12) Chan, Kwok Kou Leonard and Lee Jui-Teng. *Tracing the Origins of Hong Kong Literature*. 20th February, 2016.

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- 13) Chan, Kwok Kou Leonard. "The Story of Hong Kong Literature." Co-organized by Richmond Public Library and the University of British Columbia Hong Kong Studies Initiative. 8th March, 2018, <https://bit.ly/2mBrdxS>