

educational materials. The project will continue to expand to include elementary schools with more than 100 years of history and actively acquire through collaboration with various schools their old books, old pictures, and yearbooks to digitize. This way, even more valuable materials can be preserved and disseminated along with the library's current holdings.

■ **Gusting Winds Lecture Series: “Desire and Empire: Sima Xiangru’s Writing of All-under-Heaven”**

In an effort to promote cultural arts and encourage the public to read classical literature, on January 18, 2020, National Central Library and the Trend Education Foundation held the second lecture in Gusting Winds Lecture Series: “Trend Literature Theater: The Fantastical Han Dynasty”. The event was hosted by the Executive Director of Trend Education Foundation Jenny Chen; invited to lecture was Academia Sinica Academician and National Taiwan University Chair Professor Yu-yu Cheng, who spoke on “Desire and Empire: Sima Xiangru’s Writing of All-under-Heaven.”

Dr. Cheng’s research expertise is in classical Chinese literature, especially that of Han rhapsodies. The lecture began with an introduction to the Han dynasty and Han rhapsodies. The Han dynasty is the longest dynasty in Chinese history. During the apex of Emperor Wu’s reign, how to maintain unity in the dynasty was one of the emperor’s most critical issues. In Han rhapsody, the most important poet was Sima Xiangru. His two representative works, “Rhapsody on Zixu” and “Rhapsody on the Supreme Park,” not only describe through flowery words and many melodic sounds the possessions of a ruler but more so the desires of a ruler. That, it can be said, is almost without limit—such as the exhaustive nature of his writings.

Dr. Cheng gave a guided reading of selected passages from the two rhapsodies, showing through Sima Xiangru’s wordsmithing

a reflection of Emperor Wu’s desires, as well as creating a special dimension through text. Describing through lively words the empire or imaginative world that transcends time and space, he proclaims the formation of a supremely magnificent world never before known. It could also be said that through the text he created or constructed an eternal Han empire, embodying Emperor Wu’s bottomless desire to “possess All-under-Heaven” on his throne.

This lecture was the last event before Chinese New Year and attracted nearly 320 people. Dr. Cheng’s amazing presentation was a knowledge-filled afternoon feast. Bringing the wonderful lecture to a close was a Q&A session followed by Mrs. Chen’s summary remarks. NCL looks forward to future events of this nature with the Trend Education Foundation.



Academia Sinica Academician and Chair Professor Dr. Yu-yu Cheng speaks on “Desire and Empire: Sima Xiangru’s Writing of All-under-Heaven.”

■ **How Book History Can Enhance the Understanding of Texts: Examples from Early Modern Europe**

On January 14, 2020, National Central Library invited Harvard University Professor Dr. Ann Blair to speak at NCL on “How book history can enhance the understanding of texts: examples from early modern Europe.” Dr. Blair shared in her lecture the history of artifact research and textual transmission of knowledge. Through writing and dissemination, they form culture. Such queries as “Who wrote these texts?” and

“Who is the intended audience of book editing?” are basic research questions and thought patterns. She spoke of the influence of printing techniques, or what is called early modern printing in Europe. She then spoke of initial process of scholars and textual transmission knowledge beginning with the Renaissance. Next she spoke of the religious reforms brought about by Martin Luther and the scientific concepts of Descartes and others from the Enlightenment, when the value of transmitted knowledge greatly increased.

Dr. Blair also spoke on the significance of the German bible in terms of printing history, cultural history, and translation and dissemination. Rare books from the West reveal artistic works resulting from exquisite printing, manual revisions, and manuscript illustrations. Dr. Blair then introduced the illustrations and exquisite portraits in rare Western works, as well as how techniques in book decorations influenced the rise of business in Europe. She also spoke of the phenomenon of rare Western books, specifically through fact that many printers, editors, carvers, and errata were recorded much value was added to these ancient books.

Dr. Blair spoke of Francis Bacon, the famous thinker, researcher, businessman, and even failed politician (due to a scandal). One main characteristic of his writings was the fact that the margins were all blank. Through new discoveries and new items, Bacon enabled us to accumulate more knowledge. Through copperplate illustrations, we can see the thoughts the author wanted to portray; that is to say, surging forth on a tidal wave as we navigate the sea of knowledge.

A folio version of Shakespeare is different than the books in Latin that Francis Bacon wrote, making it a rare edition of Shakespeare’s collected plays. From the inserts in the book an outline of cities at the time is visible, as well as the rejection of actors and theatrical companies by people at the time. For this purpose, after Shakespeare died his friend went to much pains to print this folio version in an attempt to remedy this type

of prejudice. Dr. Blair analyzed the difference between the first and second folio version, as well as the traces of glue used in fixing them.



Professor Dr. Ann Blair gives a talk.



NCL Director-General Tseng (left) presents Dr. Blair with some mementos.

■ **Lecture on Contemporary Cultural Growth in India and the Experience of Learning Indian Arts in India**

The NCL and India-Taipei Association have been co-organizing the Contemporary India Talk Series since July 2019. Taiwanese artist, Ms. Hsuan-chen Liu, was invited to give the fourth talk in the series at the NCL on January 17, 2020, entitled “Contemporary Cultural Growth in India and the Experience of Learning Indian Art in India.” Despite the cold weather, the talk was well-attended.

The event organizers specially arranged for the dance group NTU Happy Feet to give a dance performance to open proceedings. Dressed in traditional saris, the dancers formed a circle and performed Thiruvathirakali, Kerala’s most