

ancient traditional dance. The graceful, elegant movements of the dance left a deep impression on the audience.

In his speech, India Taipei Association Deputy Director-General, Mr. Sohag Sen, remarked that this was the fourth in the Contemporary India Talk Series session, and thanked the audience for their support so far. He said that the speaker, Hsuan-chen Liu, had been studying in India for more than ten years where she gained a deep understanding of Indian culture and arts, and that he believed it would be difficult to find a better artist anywhere in Taiwan. He also thanked both Ms. Liu for taking time out to share her precious experiences of India with the audience, and the National Library for supporting the Contemporary India Talk Series.



Group photo of the speaker, dancers, and dignitaries from ITA and NCL at the fourth session of the Contemporary India Talk Series.



The speaker, Ms. Hsuan-chen Liu, talks about the development of contemporary Indian culture and her experiences of studying Indian arts.

In her speech, Ms. Liu described India as a country where traditional and modern culture coexist. Contemporary Indian culture not only retains its artistic heritage, but also endeavors to share these cultural assets with the world. During her talk, she introduced the audience to Mohiniyattam, one of India's oldest classical dance forms, and to India's rich heritage of mural art, while also highlighting related opportunities to study these in India. She also brought with her three wonderful Mohiniyattam performances and commentaries, giving the audience the rare opportunity to experience their power and beauty.

In her talk she gave in-depth accounts of contemporary Indian cultural development, studying the arts in India, and the process of learning and understanding the forms of Mohiniyattam classical dance. A Q&A session drew this enjoyable and enlightening afternoon to a perfect conclusion.

Understanding the Connotations of African-American History Month through the Films of Denzel Washington

To commemorate African-American History Month, also known as Black History Month, the NCL and American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) co-organized a series of screenings of Denzel Washington films for February and March 2020. African-American History Month is celebrated in the United States each February to commemorate the struggle of countless African Americans to overcome slavery, prejudice, and poverty, and to look back on the contributions African Americans have made to American cultural and political life. In 1926, renowned scholar and historian Carter G. Woodson launched Negro History Week, choosing the second week of February to coincide with the birthdays of President Abraham Lincoln and abolitionist Frederick Douglass. By 1976, the year the United States celebrated the 200th anniversary of its founding, the commemorations had been expanded and renamed "Black History

Month,” finally receiving official recognition that year.

Four classic Denzel Washington films, “Glory,” “Mo’ Better Blues,” “Crimson Tide,” and “The Great Debaters” were screened in NCL’s International Conference Hall, two on the afternoon of February 22, followed by a further two on March 7. Between screenings, AIT Cultural Affairs Officer, Mr. Eric Aldrich, led an audience discussion and appreciation of the films and took questions from the lively audience, who found these screenings and discussions of great help in better understanding the significance of African-American History Month. In response to the ongoing global Covid-19 epidemic, as the audience arrived at each event, their temperatures were monitored, alcohol-based handwash provided, and they were urged to put on masks.



AIT Cultural Affairs Officer, Eric Aldrich, leads discussion during Denzel Washington film screenings to commemorate African-American History Month.

■ **The Release of “2019 Annual Report on Reading Atmosphere and Reading Engagement in Taiwan”**

The “2019 Annual Report on Reading Atmosphere and Reading Engagement in Taiwan” is released on March 1. It analyzes the public’s reading engagement and reading interests in 2019, as well as the most borrowed books from public libraries. Using library operation statistics analysis was done on public reading ability, and cities with outstanding performances were commended.

The public’s love of going to public libraries

did not decrease in 2019. The public responded very favorably to library services, with each reading engagement metric seeing a considerable increase. The number of patrons using public libraries throughout the island surpassed 100 million for the first time. The number of patrons borrowing books increased to 22.95 million. A total of 81.3 million volumes were checked out during the year. All of these are higher than 2018 (persons visiting libraries increased 22.83 million, a 24.82% increase; persons borrowing books increased 1.28 million, a 5.9% increase; number of books borrowed increased 3.39 million volumes, a 4.35% increase). It also showed the reading power of the digital era in terms of e-reading; e-books borrowed increased 810,000 volumes, a 46.55% increase. This was the highest increase of any metric. These show the amazing results of efforts by the Ministry of Education and public libraries to promote foundational reading habits among the public.

National Central Library Director-General Shu-hsien Tseng stated, with the support of the Ministry of Education, NCL has in recent years focused on pushing forward public library projects, actively guiding public libraries throughout Taiwan, adding to the library’s holdings, improving service quality, and promoting reading among the general public. Furthermore, through holding workshops, training courses, sharing sessions, and delegations abroad, NCL is leading county and city libraries throughout the nation in improving together professional acumen. Through goals of even better holdings and more professional services, public libraries are able to continuously plant the seeds of education and reading, foster literacy among the public, and thus become an important base in the public’s developing reading ability and improving its competitive edge.

In looking at overall reading interests in 2019, Works related to language and literature continue to be a favorite of the public. In terms of books borrowed, top picks for this year are