

■ 2024 Lunar New Year Reception for Taiwan Fellowship and Research Grant for Foreign Scholars in Chinese Studies Recipients

On February 23rd of this year (2024), National Central Library's Center for Chinese Studies held a Lunar New Year Reception for recipients of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Taiwan Fellowship and their families as well as recipients of NCL's Research Grant for Foreign Scholars in Chinese Studies, also inviting esteemed guests from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as 16 representatives from foreign offices in Taiwan, including from South Korea, New Zealand, Spain, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Mongolia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines. Nearly one hundred guests gathered together to exchange ideas and experiences over tea and other refreshments, marking the start of the new year as Lunar New Year festivities came to an end.

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Chungkwang Tien gave opening remarks at the reception, during which he first thanked NCL for organizing the event and wished everyone joy in the new spring. Deputy Minister Tien also spoke of the origins of the Taiwan Fellowship program, which has been held for 14 years and has brought scholars to Taiwan from across the world. Every year, the fellowship holds presentations of research achievements and cultural visits so that participating scholars can gain deeper understanding of Taiwan's international relations and local culture. Deputy Minister Tien gave his best wishes to the foreign scholars for the smooth completion of their research projects in Taiwan and encouraged them to engage in exchange with Taiwanese friends and to enjoy the festivities in Taiwan as the Lunar New Year marks the start of the new spring. Afterward, NCL Director-General Han-ching Wang made remarks, stating that as of the end of last year, MOFA's Taiwan Fellowship and NCL's Center for Chinese Studies' Research Grant for Foreign Scholars in Chinese Studies have already brought nearly 2,000 scholars from over 120 countries to Taiwan to conduct research. This year, NCL plans to host over 120 scholars conducting research in Taiwan. Held on the eve of the Lantern

Festival, this reception is a way of welcoming scholars from various fields to Taiwan. Director-General Wang expressed her thanks to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their long-term collaboration and support as NCL, MOFA, and foreign scholars gather on this day to express mutual gratitude and congratulations and to celebrate the arrival of the new year together.

During the reception, exquisite gifts were distributed among scholars through a raffle drawing. Fine Taiwanese teas and refreshments were offered at the venue for scholars and other esteemed guests to enjoy as they engaged in conversation and exchange. In addition, this event marked the first reception at which NCL staff showcased traditional Taiwanese crafts at cultural booths, teaching scholars how to make handmade dough figurines, painted lanterns, multi-color block prints, and traditional costumes. The rich and entertaining activities made for a festive occasion at which foreign scholars fully experienced the joyful atmosphere of Lunar New Year celebrations.



Group photo at the 2024 Lunar New Year Reception for Taiwan Fellowship and Research Grant for Foreign Scholars in Chinese Studies Recipients



Foreign scholars learn to make dough figurines



Hand-painting auspicious lanterns

■ Taiwan's Reading Landscape in 2023: a Great Leap forward in National Reading Ability

The "2023 Taiwan Reading Landscape and National Reading Power Annual Report Release Press Conference" was held amid fanfare in the International Conference Hall at National Central Library on March 27, 2024. The meeting analyzed the reading power and reading interests of the people of Taiwan in 2023. On the basis of the operation service statistics of public libraries, the reading ability of the whole people was analyzed, and "cities with excellent performance in overall reading ability" and "cities with excellent performance in reading ability sub-categories" were commended in respect of a total of 142 items.

Deputy Minister of Education Min-Yu Lin expressed his gratitude to publishing and cultural circles for their joint efforts to promote reading culture among the people. He also expressed his gratitude to county, city, township and city library directors, township mayors and other distinguished guests for attending the event. The Ministry of Education continues to promote the construction and development of public libraries, fight for public construction projects, assist in improving the hardware and equipment of public libraries in counties and cities, and enrich collection resources. Analysis of various statistical data on the use of public libraries across the country this year shows that the reading performance of the public in terms of the total number of visits to libraries, the total number of books borrowed, and the number of e-books borrowed has hit new highs repeatedly. This is positive. Because reading can open the skylight of the human soul. The skylight allows one to see not only the starry

sky, but also the free and unrestrained side of the soul. Reading can also be said to be everywhere, allowing readers to express their talents freely and use their imagination. We thank again all walks of life for their strong support, through various means, to help promote reading culture among the people, so that Taiwan's reading style will turn a new page in history, so that readers can obtain more spiritual nourishment from reading.

National Central Library Director Han-Ching Wang analyzed "the people of Taiwan's reading ability" and reviewed each aspect of their reading ability in 2023. In 2023, people across the nation visited public libraries throughout Taiwan more than 18.37 billion times (an increase of 22.06 billion or 25.55 percent), and the average Chinese person entered a library 4.62 times. The total number of borrowers and the total number of books borrowed also grew significantly. In 2023, the total number of borrowers was 35.28 million (an increase of 5.3 million, or 17.67 percent), and the total number of books borrowed exceeded 127.23 billion (an increase of 34.79 billion, or 37.63 percent), with an average of 5.43 books borrowed per person nationwide. Also in 2023, many new friends joined the ranks of library users, and the cumulative number of library cards issued nationwide reached 21 billion (an increase of 980,000, 4.89 percent). In addition to actually visiting libraries to use their resources, people also use various library services through the Internet. In 2023, national e-book borrowing increased by 580,000 volumes, or 6.21 percent, and a total of more than 9.91 billion e-books were borrowed. The instances of use of various website resources reached a total of 841.4 billion (an increase of 136.22 billion or 20.39 percent).



Taiwan's reading landscape in 2023: a great leap forward in national reading ability