

## ■ University Chief Librarian Larry Alford of the University of Toronto Invited to Give A Lecture in Taiwan on August 21

With the goal of expanding international perspectives and enhancing service innovation among Taiwan's library professionals, the National Central Library welcomed Larry Alford, University Chief Librarian of the University of Toronto Libraries. His lecture, "Print Preservation in the Digital Age: Why, How, the Future," was presented on August 21, 2024.



*University Chief Librarian Larry Alford of the University of Toronto Libraries was invited to give a lecture at the NCL on August 21*

In her opening remarks, National Central Library Director-General Han-ching Wang noted that Chief Librarian Alford has made numerous significant contributions to the Canadian library community and has received multiple awards, including the Ron MacDonald Distinguished Service Award. The University of Toronto Libraries is also an important North American partner of the National Central Library. The two institutions signed a cooperation agreement in 2012, collaborated on rare book digitization in 2014, and established the 16th Taiwan Resource Center for Chinese Studies at the University of Toronto Libraries in 2015. As the National Central Library establishes its Southern Branch United Collections Center, Director-General Wang expressed gratitude to Chief Librarian Alford for visiting and sharing his rich experience with Downsview's establishment and operations.

The morning lecture focused on sharing experiences from the establishment and operation of Keep@Downsview at the University of Toronto's Downsview campus and the five-university collaborative storage facility in Canada. Chief Librarian Alford explained that the University of Toronto has 40 official libraries across three campuses, preserving 1.5 PB of digital files. It houses Canada's largest media collection and ranks third among North American academic libraries, after Harvard and Yale. Due to near-capacity on-site storage, Downsview was established in 2005. Following expansion in 2016, total capacity increased from 2 million to 5 million volumes. In 2022, plans began for another expansion to 8 million volumes, with construction starting this year and completion expected in 2026. The Chief Librarian shared insights about design requirements, operational procedures (including acid-free storage boxes, large-format book placement, intake processes, and resource selection), and collaboration with professional storage management staff. He also discussed the adoption of the Harvard model for cost reasons and the installation of solar panels to reduce forklift power costs. The morning session concluded with an active Q&A session.



*Group photo of lecture attendees*

In the afternoon Chief Librarian Alford attended a professional exchange meeting with NCL Director-General Wang and staff from different divisions. He first shared their AI applications, including chatbots for answering user queries and AI-powered search capabilities for digitized images. Subsequently, the NCL Special Collections, Digital Knowledge Systems, Collection Development and Bibliographic

Management, and Knowledge Services divisions exchanged information about “Rare book and manuscript conservation,” “Web-Archiving and Digital Preservation,” “Digital Service (online research support and other services),” and “Plan/Service being planned using AI tools.” The session concluded with discussions about manuscript authorization procedures and web archiving technologies. Besides the lecture and discussions, Chief Librarian Alford also toured the Rare Books Room and the OPEN LAB.

## ■ A Journey Through Time in the World of Plants: “Literature and Botany ‘Equally Blended’—The Plant-Inspired Life of the Ancients” Special Exhibit

In order to promote reading and guide members of the public in getting to know the fascinating ancient texts in National Central Library’s rich collection, NCL held a special themed exhibit of ancient texts entitled “Literature and Botany ‘Equally Blended’—The Plant-Inspired Life of the Ancients” from September 10th through October 23rd in the Art and Culture Center’s first floor exhibition room. The special exhibit offered a rare opportunity for members of the public to come face to face with original documents brought out of the archives.

NCL has always worked to make connections with members of the public, playing a part in their journey to seek an ideal life. This year, NCL planned the “Literature and Botany ‘Equally Blended’—The Plant-Inspired Life of the Ancients” special exhibit of ancient texts to be held in September at the start of the autumn season, selecting 20 ancient texts relating to peonies, Chinese crabapple, chrysanthemum, osmanthus, and maple trees. In Confucius’s *The Analects*, it says “Where the solid qualities are in excess of accomplishments, we have rusticity; where the accomplishments are in excess of the solid qualities, we have the manners of a clerk. When the accomplishments and solid qualities are equally blended, we then have the man of virtue.” Taking this line from *The Analects* as inspiration for its name, this exhibit looks at plants through the lens of text reading, so that we can learn about the various impacts, both big and small, that plants had on ancient life. The stories of these plants can help the public learn about how ancient people found balance among different ways of thinking and sought out their own ideal lifestyles.



Exhibit Visuals



One of the works on display in the exhibit: “Hai Tang Pu”



NCL employees introducing the exhibit to visitors