

PhD Student Wins Awards at McDonnell Academy 3MT® Competition

Jasmeen Kaur Sethi, a PhD candidate in the Department of Pathology, has won both the judges' vote and the people's choice award at a special adaptation of The University of Queensland's Three Minute Thesis (3MT®) competition at the McDonnell Academy Symposium in October 2018.

The 7th International Symposium of the McDonnell International Scholars Academy was held in Beijing, China. It featured sessions, discussions and workshops focusing on ongoing research and how the 35 partner universities of the McDonnell Academy can engage in the collaborative efforts required to address complex global challenges.

Jasmeen Kaur Sethi (second from left) with other winners and judges



PhD and professional degree students from partner institutions attending the Symposium were invited to participate in the specially adapted 3MT® competition. The presentations focused on the three themes of the Symposium: agriculture, food and water; energy and environment; and public health and ageing. Jasmeen's winning presentation, under the public health and ageing theme, was entitled 'The Ovarian Cancer Games: Catching HNF-1β targets'.



PhD Student Represents HKU at International Forum on Global Cities

Chang Liu, a PhD student in the Department of Urban Planning and Design, jointly supervised by Dr Kyung-min Nam and Dr Roger Chan, was selected to represent HKU at the Chicago Forum on Global Cities Global Student Delegation in June 2018. The Forum, hosted by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and the *Financial Times*, raised provocative questions about the influence of global cities and how they can solve pressing global challenges. Participants included mayors of global cities, world policy-makers, and leading scholars from economics, urban planning, public policy, and international relations fields.

Chang was one of the 29 global student delegates from 29 leading research universities in 22 countries around the world, who shared the next generation perspectives on global cities in the forum through in-depth panels moderated by *Financial Times* journalists, intimate discussions, innovative flash talks, intensive workshops and informal networking.



Chang Liu (second row, right) with other student delegates



The opening evening panel

From HKU to the McDonnell Academy – An Extraordinary International Research Journey



Dr Melody Yunzi Li graduated from HKU in 2012 with an MPhil degree in Translation Studies from the School of Chinese. She also holds a BA in English/Translation Studies from Sun Yat-sen University, China, and a PhD in Comparative Literature from Washington University in St. Louis, United States. She was a visiting scholar at Harvard University in 2015-16, and had research experiences at the Academic Sinica and National Sun Yat-sen University, Taiwan. Dr Li taught at Transylvania University and Lenoir-Rhyne University before joining the University of Houston as an Assistant Professor in August 2018. Her research interests

include Asian diaspora literature, modern Chinese literature and culture, migration studies, translation studies and cultural identities. Her current project focuses on Chinese diasporic literature from the 1960s to the present. She has published in various journals including 'Pacific Coast Philology', 'Telos' and others. Besides her specialty in Chinese literature, Dr Li is also a Chinese dancer and translator.

I have just started my journey as a tenure-track Assistant Professor in Chinese Studies under Modern and Classical Languages at the University of Houston in the US. I feel really lucky to land a tenure-track position so soon after finishing my PhD degree, and I definitely would not be able to do this without the friendly academic environment, helpful mentors, professors and colleagues at both HKU and Washington University in St. Louis. My mentors at the School of Chinese, HKU – Mr Joseph Poon and Dr Isaac Yue – have given me tremendous help, even now. They have been an unceasing source of inspiration, support, guidance and encouragement. Their dedication inspires me to be a good teacher and mentor to my students. The staff and faculty in our programme were all so nice that I always felt at home. The Graduate House, where I stayed a year during my MPhil time, also helped host events when I went back to visit.

I remember when I was finishing my MPhil in Translation Studies at HKU, I attended, by chance, a talk held by a cultural ambassador from Washington University about the graduate opportunities at the school, including those provided through the McDonnell International Scholars Academy. The Academy generously sponsored me for five years in my PhD programme, and gave me tremendous opportunities to network with companies and organisations in both the US and abroad. Our cohort trips to Washington DC, New York and Australia, Thanksgiving dinners at professors' houses, and networking events with the big corporations exposed us to the best part of American academic, corporate, and political culture. I would strongly recommend HKU students to apply for this programme if they are interested in the graduate programmes at Washington University. Also, my involvement in other research centres and programmes at Washington University – including the teaching centre, writing centre, libraries, Digital Humanities, Liberman Center and Graduate School – also pointed me to some promising directions in my research and offered me well-rounded professional development.

My personal and educational experiences in different regions – Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Taiwan and the US: from growing up in an Overseas Chinese (*Huaqiao*) village in Guangzhou, to studying for my MPhil at HKU, pursuing research opportunities at the Academic Sinica and National Sun Yat-sen University in Taiwan, and studying in the US – shapes my transnational projects and makes me empathise with a diverse body of students.

Dr Melody Yunzi Li

MPhil graduate, School of Chinese



Code name: Skyhawk

An Alumni Tale of Dr Ruibang Luo

Dr Ruibang Luo, a PhD graduate of HKU and now Assistant Professor of Computer Science, grew up in southern China in the city of Shenzhen. He says he was a boy like any other, with one of his favourite pastimes being watching the television. Like the kids in neighbouring Hong Kong, he watched TVB, especially the cartoons and the educational TV channels. However, he had the influence of a 'tech-savvy' mum who worked as a scientist for China Telecom; she introduced our fledgling, future bio-engineer to the wonderful world of computers. At the age of six, Ruibang had his own computer, complete with a monochrome screen and floppy discs (advanced technology for the time!). It was in these early days that he developed his keen interest in computing.

It comes as a surprise, therefore, that whilst at middle school, when he entered two competitions – 'The Olympiad in Informatics' and 'The China National Biology Olympiad' – it was the biology contest in which he was awarded second prize. This was a pivotal moment for Ruibang as it set him on course for South China University of Technology, where at the age of seventeen he was accepted to study for a bio-engineering degree.

Our story's high-flying hero graduated one year in advance of his peers, having published his work in the scientific journal *Nature Biotechnology* (published by Nature Publishing Group, UK), and then set his sights on doing research studies at HKU.

It was Professor T.W. Lam, the present Head of the Department of Computer Science, HKU, who took Ruibang under his wing and supervised his PhD study in the field of computational biology. About his much-valued mentor, Dr Luo says: "He gave me all-round support and now, as Head of Department, he will be able to influence and support more colleagues, enabling them to thrive in both science and teaching."

From this advantageous position, the time was right for Ruibang to spread his wings. Even though it was, in his own words, 'super competitive', he was able to gain a position as a post-doctoral fellow at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, United States. Here, he was able to fulfil his dream of learning directly from Professors Steven Salzberg and Mike Schatz; these Bloomberg professors were his joint supervisors, encouraging him both in research and teaching. His involvement with the McKusick-Nathans Institute of Genetic Medicine, which is the hospital side of Johns Hopkins, brought him into direct contact with both doctors and patients.



Although this overseas experience was challenging and fulfilling, Dr Luo chose to return to Hong Kong and HKU for three main reasons: "Firstly, my family; secondly, my duty to contribute to my country; and, thirdly, my dream to influence and inspire my students as other great people have done for me."

Dr Luo's advice to his students at HKU is to have a good work/life balance. Does he follow his own advice?

Well, look beyond the man of algorithms and biological systems, the white lab coat, and the dimly lit face reflected in a computer screen, and see the other side of Dr Luo Ruibang: here is the traveller, the adventurer, the romantic, the pioneer.

Whilst in the States, Dr Luo cut travelling time by flying (he has a private pilot's license) to the supermarket in the neighbouring state of Delaware in a Cessna 172 Skyhawk. He smiles as he wonders whether that really did cut the grocery bill.

With his much-loved wife of three years, he enjoys travelling, scuba diving and exploring the countries around Hong Kong. With a fresh mind he can then focus back on his research, which currently involves helping rare disease patients and cancer patients to benefit from more timely and accurate diagnosis with more personalised treatments. "I'm practising 'precision medicine' by collaborating with medical doctors in Hong Kong, in mainland China and abroad by inventing new hardware and software technologies and solutions for higher efficiency and lower costs."

Dr Luo now has numerous publications to his name, underlining the serious commitment to his work. His latest paper, on artificial neural networks, is entitled 'Skyhawk', reminding us that one can take flight from the work environment and return later reinvigorated. As an academic, Dr Luo believes that maintaining a healthy work-life balance is very important. The epilogue to his PhD says: "Don't worry, be happy".

U21 Provost Meets HKU RPg Students during HK Visit

Professor Bairbre Redmond, Provost of Universitas 21 (U21) – a leading global network of research-intensive universities that empowers its members to share excellence, collaborate across borders and nurture global knowledge exchange – visited Hong Kong in October 2018. During her visit, Professor Redmond met Professor Mee Len Chye and Professor Ben Young, Dean and Associate Dean (Innovation and Internship) of the Graduate School. She also attended an inspiring series of research presentations given by our RPg students who won the U21 Graduate Collaborative Research Awards (GCRA) and the Three Minute Thesis Competition. HKU won three of the six awards in the latest round of GCRA this year. Congratulations to Kanmani, Hui and Yulia!



Back row: (from left) Jasmeen Kaur Sethi (PhD student, Department of Pathology), Suki Suet Yee Yiu (PhD student, School of Humanities (Linguistics)), Hui Zhou (PhD student, Department of Civil Engineering) and Mei Li Khong (PhD student, School of Biomedical Sciences)

Front row: (from left) Kanmani Chandra Rajan (PhD student, School of Biological Sciences), Professor Mee Len Chye, Professor Bairbre Redmond, Professor Ben Young and Yulia Nesterova (PhD student, Faculty of Education)

Workshop on Innovation and Entrepreneurship

A Workshop on Innovation and Entrepreneurship, co-organised by the Graduate School and the Graduate House, was held on October 29, 2018 at the Wang Gungwu Lecture Hall, attracting over 100 students and staff.

In his opening remarks, Professor Andy Hor, Vice President and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), highlighted the need for RPg students of this generation to grasp every opportunity to develop their skills and capability in innovation and entrepreneurship. He emphasised that HKU strongly supports knowledge exchange, where staff and students apply their expertise and research to benefit the community and create an impact.

Professor Barbara Chan of the Department of Mechanical Engineering talked about the challenges of translating technologies into clinical applications. Professor Chan co-founded a company, Living Tissues Company Limited, to develop a new cartilage regeneration technology to grow cartilage tissues out of cells taken from the human body. Supported by funding from the Technology Start-up Support Scheme for Universities, she set up the company with two of her former PhD students and a long-term mentor. Their challenges included undertaking the first-in-human trial and addressing issues related to safety and quality assurance and regulatory compliance, as well as securing support from the right investors. Throughout the process, Professor Chan and her team would always reflect on their underlying intentions (did they want to make a lot of money, become stars, develop a technology to improve human health, etc.) before arriving at their decisions.

Professor Anthony Yeh, Chair Professor of the Department of Urban Planning and Design, suggested a list of exhibitions and competitions that RPg students could join to test their ideas. He also elaborated on the 'Challenge Cup' National Competition Hong Kong Regional Final – Hong Kong University Student Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition. At the end of his presentation, he placed great emphasis on effective presentation skills in the competitions and encouraged students to watch the 3MT® videos (3-minute thesis presentation) for reference.

Mr Florian Simmendinger, CEO and Co-Founder of Soundbrenner Limited, shared on how to set up and develop a hardware company from an idea to the manufacturing stage. Florian was born and raised in Germany. After finishing his degree in business administration, he spent two years living and working throughout China before he set up his business in Hong Kong in 2014. His company Soundbrenner is the maker of the world's first wearable device for musicians to master rhythm better and faster. In the workshop, he shared with participants his journey as a young entrepreneur and the lessons he has learned. His passion and perseverance, he believes, are the keys to his success.

A tea reception was held at the end of the workshop to enable informal exchange between the speakers and participants.



PhD Candidates Awarded U21 Funding for International Collaborative Research

Universitas 21 (U21) – a global network of research-intensive universities – has recently announced the recipients of the Graduate Collaborative Research Awards, designed to develop lasting professional relationships between researchers and research teams within the U21 network. Through the Awards, three projects led by HKU PhD candidates or supervisors were successfully funded:

Project Title:

Oyster as a model for studying biomineralisation in the acidifying future oceans

Ocean acidification (OA) is well known as a threat for shell fishes such as oysters. The mechanism behind the harmful effects of OA to biomineralisation (process of shell formation) is unclear, and the proposed project aims to identify this mechanism as well as the shell mechanical properties of oysters grown under OA conditions using the electron backscatter diffraction technique.

Project Team Members from HKU:

- Kanmani Chandra Rajan (PhD candidate, School of Biological Sciences)
- Yong Kian Lim (PhD candidate, School of Biological Sciences)
- Weichen Qi (PhD candidate, Department of Orthopaedics and Traumatology)
- Wei Qiao (PhD candidate, Faculty of Dentistry)
- Priti Rath (MPhil candidate, Faculty of Dentistry)
- Dr Vengatesen Thiyagarajan (School of Biological Sciences)
- Dr Kelvin Yeung (Department of Orthopaedics and Traumatology)
- Dr Prasanna Neelakantan (Faculty of Dentistry)

Collaborating Institutions:

The University of Auckland
The University of British Columbia



From left:
Kanmani Chandra Rajan,
Priti Rath, Dr Vengatesen
Thiyagarajan and
Yong Kian Lim

Project Title:

Multi-user voice-driven BIM-based navigation system for fire emergency response

This project aims to develop a voice-driven building information model (BIM)-based indoor navigation system to support multiple responders (i.e. occupants, firefighters and facility managers) with their evacuation or rescue during fire emergencies in residential buildings, with a more natural and intuitive navigation query input and command method using direct and prompt natural language speech.

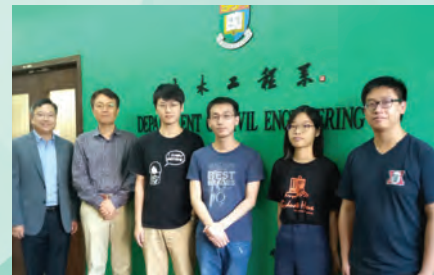
Project Team Members from HKU:

- Hui Zhou (PhD candidate, Department of Civil Engineering)
- Mun On Wong (PhD candidate, Department of Civil Engineering)
- Huaquan Ying (PhD candidate, Department of Civil Engineering)
- Yun Ye (PhD candidate, Department of Civil Engineering)
- Dr Sanghoon Lee (Department of Civil Engineering)
- Professor Sze Chun Wong (Department of Civil Engineering)

Collaborating Institutions:

Shanghai Jiao Tong University
The University of Auckland

From left: Professor Sze Chun Wong,
Dr Sanghoon Lee, Yun Ye, Huaquan
Ying, Hui Zhou and Mun On Wong



Project Title:

Teacher perceptions of indigenous learners in Taiwan

This mixed method study investigates in-service teachers' expectations and perceptions of, knowledge about and attitudes towards indigenous students in Taiwan. This study is an important step in identifying appropriate interventions to improve indigenous students' academic achievement, and it has implications for teacher education and professional development.

Project Team Members from HKU:

Yulia Nesterova (PhD candidate, Faculty of Education)
Dr Liz Jackson (Faculty of Education)

Collaborating Institutions:

The University of Auckland
The University of Melbourne

From left:
Dr Liz Jackson and
Yulia Nesterova



HKU Engineering PhD Students Win CIOB (HK) Outstanding Paper Award

Two HKU Hong Kong PhD Fellowship awardees – Yi Yang and Mi Pan, both from the Department of Civil Engineering – won the Silver Award in the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB Hong Kong) Outstanding Paper Awards Competition 2018. The aim of the Awards is to promote excellence in construction management and inspire students in Hong Kong to explore and share smart construction approaches, with a focus this year on the theme 'Smart Construction. Collaborate Excellence'. Their awarded paper, 'Co-evolution of innovative building technologies through interaction: The case of modular integrated construction and robotics', provides recommendations for public policy and successful strategies for the Hong Kong construction industry to achieve long-term benefits from innovations. Yi's PhD project focuses on modular integrated construction for high-rise buildings, and Mi's project is about robotics for construction. Both

are supervised by Dr Wei Pan, Associate Professor in Construction Engineering and Management and Executive Director of the HKU Centre for Innovation in Construction and Infrastructure Development.



From left: Dr Wei Pan (second), Mi Pan (sixth), Yi Yang (seventh), with the presenter Mr Wai-lun Wong, Secretary for Development (eighth), and other awardees and honourable guests

Insights from AsiaGlobal Fellows: Pursuing an Alternative Academic Path

The AsiaGlobal Fellows Program at HKU is a global initiative designed to nurture future leaders. AsiaGlobal Fellows are promising mid-career professionals from around the world and across a spectrum of occupations. They share a common policy interest in Asia, have demonstrated strong leadership potential, and are committed to making a positive impact on society. A central goal of the Program is to further develop the leadership skills of tomorrow's leaders and broaden their global knowledge, exposure and experience.

A panel discussion with five AsiaGlobal Fellows was organised by the Graduate School on October 23, 2018 at the Graduate House, where research postgraduate (RPg) students met with the Fellows to explore how to prepare for an alternative academic path in the humanities and sciences sectors. The five Fellows were Dr Prakash Bhattarai, a researcher and social change practitioner from Nepal; Dr Amit Wanchoo, a medical doctor in India who has developed diverse career paths; Dr Bradley Hiller from Australia, a consultant on sustainable development worldwide; Ms Vera Kobalia from Georgia, a young politician and global leader in economic reforms; and Mr Chibueze Nnanna Anyanwu from Nigeria, an engagement manager who has driven public sector reforms and

performance improvements. The five Fellows – with their unique backgrounds, cultures and expertise – unreservedly shared their stories of personal growth, beliefs and thoughts with RPgs. The qualities they highlighted as being essential for a successful career included being diligent, determined, passionate, open and flexible especially at times of crisis, resilient, confident, 'socially intelligent', ready and willing to help others, and appreciative.

The panel discussion was enlightening and inspiring, and the participating RPgs, as well as the Graduate School, were very grateful to the Fellows for their in-depth and generous sharing.



EHS Summer Meeting, Cambridge 2018: First Impressions of an International Academic Conference

Tim King Fai Yung is a PhD candidate in School of Humanities (History) and Hong Kong PhD Fellowship awardee. His research focuses on South China Anglican Identity in the early twentieth century. Tim attended the 2018 EHS Summer Conference held at Sidney Sussex College, University of Cambridge and presented a paper on canons and constitutions in the South China Diocese.

If you asked about what struck me most at the summer meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society (EHS), I would be lying if I said it was the papers given at the conference. Frankly, whilst I attended a wide variety of talks ranging from thirteenth-century Templar Knights to contemporary Serbian law all under the banner of 'The Church and the Law', my memory fails to recapture most of the content. The arguments were prepared, crafted, and presented well. I listened. I did not fall asleep, nor skip sessions. Yet, it would require a superhuman memory to retain even half.

So, what struck me most from the EHS Conference? If anything, it was the academic culture, which was something *caught* rather than *taught*. Three items stand out.

The first was inclusiveness, which is a deep and wide attitude towards historical research. Attendees hailed from various parts of the world and their research hailed from even more varied parts. Who knew that a researcher looking into the appointment of Lutheran bishops in Finland could sit alongside a specialist on the National Christian Council of China? I remember my School instructing the newly enrolled RPs that the purpose of academic research was to create and share knowledge. It made sense to me at the time as I thought about it, but it made even more sense as I experienced it this summer. Moreover, the EHS summer conference not only involved academics doing all sorts of research, but also researchers at all stages of their career. Among the hundred or so attendees were PhD students, aspiring post-docs, tenured professors, and retirees.



Exploring Clare College before the conference

The second was inquisitiveness. I observed this culture in every session I attended through the heavily-defended question time. Here were listeners, not just hearers. Every speaker was confronted with thoughtful questions from a reflective audience, which consisted of leaders in their field as well as those with no prior knowledge of the speaker's topic. This culture went beyond the sessions too, spilling over into conversations at tea breaks. On my part, a memorable moment was when a historian of the early church intentionally walked over to share some encouragement after my communication about constitutions in the Chinese Anglican Church. How humbling to receive positive feedback from a listener, even though her research was millennia apart. Another memorable moment was when a much older researcher who had posed a question (which I left vaguely answered at best) came up to me afterwards for further discussion and to spur me on in this research.

Finally, I was struck by the intimacy of the EHS. With over fifty years' history, the old-timers were friends as well as colleagues. Yet, they were also the outward-looking sort of friend who made the effort to reach out to the shy new faces at the conference. The organisers of the conference demonstrated their collegiality through the logistical arrangement that provided a healthy mix of research and recreation, tea and talks.

The other day a friend said to me, "I thought so-and-so should be like this ideally, because it was my first impression of it". Well, here are my first impressions of academia after one year of doctoral studies: I have encountered many sorts in the academic world, from those who cast academia as a bleak terrain with ceaseless struggle for funding, publication and collaboration, to others who gladly and freely share. The EHS summer meeting helps me see the beauty and feasibility of the latter whilst being no stranger to the realities of the former.

Tim King Fai Yung

PhD candidate, School of Humanities (History)

(A similar version of this text first appeared on the EHS blog: <https://eccleshistsoc.wordpress.com/2018/09/07/the-church-and-the-law-cambridge-2018-first-impressions-of-the-ehs/>.)

How to Contribute to UN Publications and Guidelines



Wesley Teter (third from left) with his fellow students

The United Nations (UN) is an intergovernmental organisation tasked with promoting and securing international co-operation and creating and maintaining international order. With objectives that include maintaining international peace and security, protecting human rights, promoting sustainable social and economic development, and providing humanitarian aid in cases of natural and human-induced disasters, the UN is concerned with issues confronting humanity in the 21st century, such as peace and security, climate change, sustainable development, human rights, disarmament, terrorism, humanitarian and health emergencies, gender equality, governance, food production, and more.

Building on your academic interests, there are growing numbers of opportunities to publish and share expertise through the UN system worldwide. In the context of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, all countries face interconnected and trans-disciplinary problems that HKU is already addressing. Wesley Teter, a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education, recently served as Co-editor of the 2018 UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Guidelines on Qualifications Frameworks in the Asia-Pacific Region. Here are some ideas from Wesley on how RPg students can get involved in UN publications and research opportunities:

- **Show up:** Building on your network and specialisation, you could travel and engage with the UN. That may be through national or regional events, but you will need to do the legwork to search for active working groups and upcoming opportunities, including for young professionals. Many of these events are not online, so you need to be proactive and ask for details. Contact specialists in national or regional hubs for UN agencies in Bangkok and Jakarta. Make it happen!
- **Offer to contribute a case study:** The UN, including UNESCO, is always looking for hard-working professionals – your willingness and skills are key assets. Finding your working group of interest and using your faculty contacts in HKU can help you get invited to contribute a case study or literature review, or perhaps even help conduct an evaluation.
- **Think projects:** Bridging policy and practice takes persistence. How can your research be broken down or help support projects in the region? If you do not already have a concept note or one-pager about your ideas, you could develop a working draft. Showing up with project ideas and proposals that meet targeted needs is key to success.
- **Learn and adapt:** As you juggle your busy schedule, you will be constantly learning and adapting. As you grow, you may find yourself repeating the steps above as you refine your ideas. Enjoy that creative process.

More about the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and the new UNESCO Guidelines are online here:

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>

<https://bangkok.unesco.org/index.php/content/guidelines-developing-and-strengthening-qualifications-frameworks-asia-and-pacific-building>



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