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Closing Ceremony presentation  
PNC 2012, Berkeley

40 years ago, as a graduate student in Chinese, I sat in Lew Lancaster's classes, read the *Diamond Sutra* and learned about Xuanzang and Kumarajiva and how Buddhism had spread to China over the silk road. Computers at the time were huge, expensive, and had to be programmed with punched cards in FORTRAN. As a humanities major, I never got near one, but my girlfriend who was studying library science learned to program. The next year as a student for the second time in Taiwan, I went to Academia Sinica lectures on Roosevelt Road. Since a 3 minute phone call to the US cost as much as a month's rent, I wrote my girlfriend daily aérograms with a fine-tipped pen in small text, and a few weeks later I would get a response back.

18 years ago, still ABD in Chinese but with a Ph.D in IT, as the new CIO for the University of Alaska system I attended the second PNC meeting in Hong Kong. There I listened again to Lew Lancaster, this time spinning a story about how all the world's Buddhist texts could be digitized, searched, and made available to scholars who did not have access to East Asian libraries (such as those of us in Fairbanks Alaska). C.C. Hsieh from Academia Sinica explained many of the technical details of how this might happen. All of us wanted to check our email, but the whole point of PNC was that there was no Internet in Asia (and in the US, it was available only to academics and the government). Most people made international phone calls to their US modem pools. I had a subscription to a commercial packet switching network run by British Telecom, and so could dial in to that at 110 bits per second, telnet to the Alaska text-based email system, and almost as fast as I could type tell my library science professor wife about how the world was changing.

At the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of PNC in 2003 in Bangkok, we heard about the impending completion of many of the pioneer digitization projects, about the new Taiwan National Digital Archives Program, and saw how PNC had reinvented itself from promoting IT connectivity to promoting use of computing tools in the humanities, as well as the increased importance of GIS. We all had wired internet connections at the conference. I went to a nearby 7-11, bought a local SIM card for my cell phone, walked to Starbucks and called my wife to tell her about it.

At this 19<sup>th</sup> meeting, we have seen how mature the field has become. Under the theme of *Connecting Culture, Community, Time and Place*, PNC has lost many of its' silos. There was no longer obviously a track for ECAI, one for PRDLA, one for EBTI – the different tracks were well integrated and many participants moved between them. The keynotes came from different areas, unified by the conference theme. Sophy Chen gave an outstanding summary of the ten-year Taiwan National Digital Archives Program,

and Stephen Abrams gave an excellent summary of how the maturing of the California Digital Library project has led to the need for even higher levels of curation. On a related theme, Aming Tu summarized the need to provide higher-level organization for the extremely successful CBETA project, and today we heard similar presentations about experience at Stanford and in Hong Kong.

Two higher-level factors seem to summarize the presentations at this conference. **One is the need for curation and management of collections.** It is no longer enough to make digital resources available; collection need to be organized, publicized and generally managed. **The other is that the state of the art is no longer making information available, but in using it.** Many of the most interesting presentations were how the availability of these resources has led us to change our understanding of our disciplines. So, for example, Lew Lancaster reported that based in part on research on transport in the Roman Empire and in part on the mapping of Buddhist sites in South India, he has realized that Buddhism spread mostly by sea, rather than by the Silk Road. With our wireless laptops, tablets and smart phones, most of us stayed as connected to our social and professional networks as if we were at home.

Phase one of PNC was bringing connectivity to the Pacific Rim. Phase two was creating and integrating digital resources for the humanities. Both of these are fast becoming invisible aspects of infrastructure which we so take for granted that we do not notice them. Phase three? Stay tuned!