



## Research Clusters and Impact Cases

The University promotes collaboration among colleagues to pool their knowledge in order to foster research excellence and to generate research impact in academia and society at large. The following three areas summarize major thrusts developed among colleagues collaborating with academics, practitioners, industries, and communities.

### Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage fosters the development of identities. Colleagues from the Departments of History, Sociology, and Journalism Communication conducted multiple studies on cultural heritage in Hong Kong and China in the East Asian context. These studies allow the public to re-examine various types of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Some projects help in the preservation of the cultural heritage or revitalizing them with new means.

#### Virtual Museum of National Intangible Cultural Heritage (VNICH) An Impact Case by Professor CHAN, Ching Selina

With funding support from the Intangible Cultural Heritage Office and Quality Enhancement Support Scheme (QESS), Professor Selina Chan has constructed a virtual museum with participation from local practitioners as community partners. Based on long-term fieldwork and research, the virtual museum has documented and exhibited the first national intangible cultural heritage (ICH) display in Hong Kong - the Chaozhou Hungry Ghosts Festival. The virtual museum adopts VR technology, including a 3D model of an altar in a temporary bamboo-scaffolding structure at a street corner, a 360-degree video, visual archival materials, old newspapers, photographic records, and various animations. It was selected as one of 25 representative projects to showcase the innovative scientific research development of Hong Kong in the 11-day InnoTech Expo 2022 organized by Our Hong Kong Foundation, an event which attracted more than 100,000 visitors. It was also included as a showcase in the “傳承精神命脈，活化非遺文明” exhibition by Bauhinia Magazine in November 2022 at the Hong Kong Central Library.



A 3D model of the temporary altar set up by the organizers of the San Kwok Mar Tou Yulan Association in Sheung Wan, Hong Kong.



Virtual Museum Layout

The virtual museum adopts VR technology, including a 3D model of an altar in a temporary bamboo-scaffolding structure at a street corner, a 360-degree video, visual archival materials, old newspapers, photographic records, and various animations. It has paved a new way to document and promote ICH through displaying Durkheim's collective effervescence, its festive atmosphere, and communal spirits, an effort which has largely not been attempted before. It has attracted curators from museums in Hong Kong who wish to learn about using VR in future exhibitions to display both examples of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

The virtual museum has also displayed ICH as a living heritage, which has further facilitated critical dialogues on the dynamics of ICH, whilst empowering the voices of the local community. The project has successfully promoted the transmission of ICH by adopting VR technology as a new methodological tool. It has also supported public education by providing an immersive, experiential, and interactive experience to users from different parts of the world.

### Creating a new way of documenting and exhibiting festival and ICH

The use of VR technology in the virtual museum has demonstrated a new way of documenting and exhibiting ICH in Hong Kong. It has received positive comments from professionals in museums, including Dr. Louis Chi Wah Ng, the Director of the Hong Kong Palace Museum, as well as curators from the Hong Kong Intangible Cultural Heritage Museum and the Antiquities and Monuments Office. Comments included, "The immersive experience provides visual and hearing excitement," "The exchange amongst visitors in the virtual museum facilitates the interactive experience," and "VR will be a future trend of exhibitions."

Around 30 curators and related professionals from the Antiquities and Monuments Office and Intangible Cultural Heritage Museum arranged special visits to experience the Museum via Oculus Rift and a VR cave at the Hong Kong Shue Yan University. Amongst museum professionals, 92% found that the virtual museum was innovative and 53.8% believed that it was extremely innovative. Upon visiting the virtual museum, 88.3% of these professionals believed that museums would consider adopting VR exhibitions. After visiting the virtual museum, 92.2% of them believed that virtual immersive experiences should be adopted in the exhibitions of their own museums in the future. Their comments included, "VR technology could be added in future exhibitions of ICH so that the audience there could also have an immersive experience," "The use of technology will enhance interest in learning about cultural heritage," and "This technology should be more widely used in exhibitions."



### Innovative pedagogical practice through experiential learning

Universities have used the VR museum to facilitate the teaching of courses in Sociology, Anthropology, History, and General Education. The VR technology adopted in the museum creates the experiential learning experience of a virtual field trip, while also facilitating engagement among virtual visitors. Teachers in secondary schools are enthusiastic about using the virtual museum to support the teaching of heritage, since digital technology appeals to young people.

### Promoting public education on the traditional festival, ICH, and Hong Kong culture

Surveys conducted among 169 visitors of the InnoTech Expo and 109 visitors of the exhibition at the Central Library (those surveyed ranging in age from 13 to 80 years old) show that after visiting, most people had increased interest and knowledge in the Hungry Ghosts festival, intangible cultural heritage, and Hong Kong culture in general. Among the 109 visitors to the virtual museum in the Exhibition at the Central Library, 87% improved their knowledge of the festival as an ICH and 89% increased their knowledge of Hong Kong culture.

### Attracting young people to gain interest in traditional cultures

The immersive experience provided by the virtual museum has attracted young people to be more interested in cultural heritage and Hong Kong culture. The change in attitude among this group of visitors is more significant as compared to other visitors. From the InnoTech Expo, surveys with 58 visitors from 13–17 years old show that 95% of them never participated in the Yulan festival and 72% had not even heard of it. After visiting the virtual museum, 77.6% of interviewees had gained more interest in learning about Hong Kong culture and 67.2% also wanted to know more about the festival. Among this group of adolescents, 56% had also become interested in watching the festival in real life after visiting the virtual museum.

Curators from the ICH Office and AMO entered the VR museum via Oculus Quest 2

### Selected Related Publications

**Chan, S. C.** (2023). Unequal Inscriptions of the Hungry Ghosts (Yulan) Festival Celebrations as Intangible Cultural Heritage in Hong Kong. *China Perspectives*.

**Chan, S. C.** (2020). Heritage conservation and ethnic associations: The Chaozhou Hungry Ghosts Festival in Hong Kong 1. In *Heritage and Religion in East Asia* (pp. 125–147). London: Routledge.

**Chan, S. C.** (2019). Creepy No More: Inventing the Chaozhou Hungry Ghosts Cultural Festival in Hong Kong. *Review of Religion and Chinese Society*, 6(2), 273–296.

**Chan, S. C.** (2018). Heritagizing the Chaozhou Hungry Ghosts Festival in Hong Kong. In *Chinese Heritage in the Making: Experiences, Negotiations and Contestations* (pp. 145–168). Amsterdam: University Press.

**Chan, S. C. 陳禧** (2019). Religious festival and local stories in a global city: 30 houses Hungry Ghosts Festival celebration (宗教節日與大城市的小故事：中環士丹頓街三十間孟蘭勝會). In V. W. Zheng & M. K. Chow (Eds.), *The Path Along the Mid-level Escalator (半山電梯青雲路)* (pp. 348–380). Hong Kong: Chung Hwa Book Co. (HK) Ltd. (中華書局). (In Chinese)



*Launch of the Virtual Museum (Phase 1) in May 2022 – [left to right]*

*Dr. CHOW Tak Sang Jason (HKSJU), Professor MAK, King Sang (Chairperson, Intangible Cultural Heritage Advisory Board), Professor CHEUNG, Siu Keung (HKSJU), Dr. NG, Chi Wah Louis (Director of Hong Kong Palace Museum), Professor CHAN, Chin Selina (HKSJU), Dr. HU Fai Chung (HKSJU), Mr. LAM Kwok Fai Brian, (Intangible Cultural Heritage Office) Mr FU Chiu Yung Billy (HKSJU), Mr. LOK Yan Lok Kenny (HKSJU), Mr. LEUNG Tat Wai Michael (Intangible Cultural Heritage Office), Ms CHAN Yuk Sim (Hong Kong Chronicles)*



*Launch of the Virtual Museum (Phase 1) in May 2022 – An demonstration to the community partners*





Exhibition in the Central Library, “傳承精神命脈，活化非遺文明：中華文化遺產和國際非遺交流系列活動” – PI Professor CHAN, Ching Selina [middle]



InnoTech Expo 2022: Hong Kong's former Chief Executive and the current President of Our Foundation visited the booth

Museum curators visited the virtual museum at the VR cave at the Hong Kong Shue Yan University on 2 September 2022.

