

## Chinese Scholars' Studio at Victoria University Incorporating the Chinese Print Legacy project

Victoria University of Wellington has many renowned and well-regarded Chinese academic programmes and institutes – including a thriving Chinese language programme, a strong Chinese and Asia focus within the school of History, Politics and International Relations, the Confucius Institute which is dedicated to promoting Chinese language study and cultural and intellectual exchanges, and the NZ Contemporary China Research Centre. There is also a thriving community of Chinese students and academics at the University, reflecting the strong links with the Asia Pacific region that Victoria University holds. However, there is no physical space at the University that provides a focus for this interdisciplinary Chinese academic study or for Chinese related initiatives that link to the wider Wellington community.

Victoria University has a desire to create a traditional Chinese scholars' studio that would provide an exciting space to share our unique Chinese New Zealand initiatives with the wider community. The space would reflect the unique New Zealand context of our Chinese heritage. The studio would house traditional Chinese furniture, musical instruments and scholarly material, including New Zealand's only original restored Chinese print collection (details below). The studio would provide a focus for Victoria University's Chinese related programmes and for scholars interested in Chinese research and study. The studio would also provide a space for community outreach work and would provide an important link to other Chinese cultural heritage in Wellington such as the Chinese Garden that Wellington City Council is proposing and the Chinese historic district on Haining and Frederick Streets. The location for the studio is yet to be confirmed, but possibilities include a space at Victoria's Kelburn campus, or in the proposed Chinese gardens on Wellington's waterfront.

The studio could have many uses, including:

- A working studio for scholars to carry out research and research-led teaching with a focus on Chinese literary culture and its contemporary interpretations.
- A function space for Chinese related events such as ink art exhibitions, book launches, tea ceremonies, or receptions for visiting Chinese dignitaries or academics.
- A space to provide an outreach programme for schools and communities to sample, experience, and reflect on Chinese cultural traditions.
- Opportunities to run an Artist in Residence programme particularly relating to the reinstated Chinese print collection. This would allow a series of artists or scholars to use the collection to create new works or research into Chinese print, calligraphy, font design, etc.



*An example of a traditional Chinese scholar's studio*

### **Chinese Print Legacy project**

One of the important uses for the space would be to provide a home for the reinstated and conserved Chinese printing collection that Victoria University hopes to re-house in 2016. This is New Zealand's only surviving original Chinese print type collection, which was used by the Chinese Commercial Growers Press to print its monthly newsletters, and was recently rediscovered in a farmer's field in Pukekohe. The print collection holds significant cultural history for the Chinese community and Wai-te-ata Press at Victoria University has been involved in discussions since 2007 to conserve it and repatriate it to Wellington. These types were used to print the *NZ Chinese Growers Monthly* journal from 1949 to 1971, the longest continuous Chinese language publication in NZ. This project represents an unprecedented opportunity to save and use the only Chinese types in existence in New Zealand. It returns the material and mana to its original city and will enable the Chinese and wider community to reflect on the past and participate in a new future for both the printed and digital word.

The next phase of work is to relocate the collection to Wai-te-ata Press at Victoria University, conserve and clean the typefaces, build new type cases for those that are missing, sort the types and involve the Chinese community in new printing projects. There are tremendous opportunities for the Chinese community to participate in new printing projects using the print types. These could include small-run editions of pamphlets, magazines or posters for special occasions.

The type collection and information built up around the collection would generate interest and provide opportunities for research on Chinese New Zealand print culture from members of the Chinese and wider community as well as students and academics at Victoria University. Commissions and competitions to produce locally-inflected digital fonts would extend the reach of the types and spearhead a new appreciation of print languages. These projects would benefit all New Zealanders interested in the unique role Chinese New Zealanders have made to the development of this country and its multicultural legacy.

### **Cost**

The full costs of the Chinese Scholars' Studio are still to be confirmed and will be dependent on location. However an indicative cost for the reinstatement and conservation of the Chinese print legacy project is \$65,000. Victoria University is seeking philanthropic support to help raise funds for this project.

### **Potential partners**

Victoria University will involve a range of partners in the project, including:

- Alumni from Chinese related disciplines at Victoria University
- Chinese Poll Tax Heritage Trust
- NZ Chinese Association
- NZ Chinese Commercial Growers Association
- Wellington City Council
- Wellington Xiamen Association
- Asia New Zealand Foundation
- New Zealand-China Friendship Society- Wellington Chapter
- Turnbull Library

### **For more information or to support the project please contact:**

Cheryl Spain, Development Manager, Victoria University of Wellington

Phone: 04 463 6479 Mobile: 022 5630020

[Cheryl.spain@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Cheryl.spain@vuw.ac.nz)