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Dr. Y.C. Wan | Director of Library Services

The University of Hong Kong (HKU) was founded in 1910, making it the oldest tertiary education institution in Hong Kong, and today it attracts more than 20,000 students from mainland China and around world. As a leading research university, HKU prides itself on developing the largest number of research post-graduate students in the territories.

As with most universities, HKU's Libraries (HKUL) provide much needed resources to the campus community and beyond, with the exception of a few rare collections unique only to HKUL. The libraries' Hankow and Morrison Collections are home to rare, out-of-copyright books, dealing specifically with China and more generally with Asia.

“Our collection of rare books on China in Western languages is rather unique in this part of the world,” noted Dr. Y.C. Wan who oversees main library services. “We need to exploit the full value of this collection by both scanning and producing fully useable e-books as rapidly and inexpensively as possible.”

E-books are the digital media equivalent to a conventional printed book. They can be downloaded to your computer in various file formats enabling you to search and cross-reference text using hyperlinks making e-books highly desirable for research work.

The Kirtas Solution

In order to begin this transformation from hard-copy books to e-books, HKUL needed an efficient, cost-effective, gentle, high-quality digitizing solution. Together with their partner iGroup, Kirtas Technologies was able to provide it.

HKUL decided to purchase a Kirtas APT BookScan 2400, a book digitization system that can capture up to 2,400 pages per hour using two high-resolution cameras. The cameras capture each

right- and left-hand page simultaneously through their precision 24-70 mm Zoom EF lenses in full color with all the details, in a fraction of a second.

“Technically, the Kirtas system provides a total solution to our scanning of rare books and the production of their digital counterpart,” said Wan. Previously, HKUL attempted an in-house operation to scan rare books, but the results led them to discover that it was not an efficient or cost-effective way to tackle mass digitization.

“It [the Kirtas system] also enables us to work with a regional Asian partner like iGroup to fully exploit the potential value of our content and gain global visibility and identification with other leading universities who partnered with Kirtas.”

The Next Step

So what does the future hold for HKUL now that they've embarked on their own mass-digitization journey? “We will use the Kirtas machine for other collections,” concluded Wan. “Early serials about China, our own theses collections, and other non-copyrighted books.”



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