

Remarks for opening ceremony at Wuhan University's School of Information Management, 90th anniversary celebration

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Mr. President, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for welcoming me to Wuhan University. I bring congratulations to the School of Information Management on the 90th anniversary of your founding, from the international iSchools Consortium. As others will have said, the Boone Library School, from which the current School of Information Management is descended, was the first institution of its kind in China. As the joint effort of an American, Mary Elizabeth Wood, and a Chinese, Samuel T. Y. Seng, it is a great historical example of what can be accomplished when Chinese and Americans collaborate, and it reminds us that, although collaboration is often a challenge, if it is done with a selfless interest in advancing knowledge and serving people's needs, the results are well worth the effort.

The iSchool that I direct is the University of Illinois' Graduate School of Library and Information Science. Connections between Illinois and Wuhan go back a long time. Lincoln Cha (Ch'a Hsui), one of the "Happy Six" – the first class of students at the Boone Library School, studied in the library school at the University of Illinois, after his graduation from Boone, starting in 1927. His teachers "proclaimed him the best Chinese student ever to attend the library school there." He stayed on after his library degree to get a masters degree and then a doctorate in political science, and returned to China in 1933. While at Illinois, he worked as a student assistant in the cataloging department of the Library, helping to process a backlog of Chinese items. Many of the items he cataloged are still in the Asian Library. Cha returned to the Boone Library School briefly, to play an administrative role, and then went to a long career in libraries and diplomacy. Eleanor Booth and Grace Darling Phillips, who taught at English-language library science courses at Boone in the 1930s, were also educated in the library school at the University of Illinois, ¹

Today, Wuhan's School of Information Management (SIM) and the University of Illinois' Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS) collaborate as partners in the iSchools Consortium, and Xuyan Tang of the Hubei Provincial Library has recently returned from participating in the "Think Globally, Act Globally" project, funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services in partnership with the University of Illinois Library, the Ministry of Culture of China, the Chinese American Library Association, and the Library Society of China. In a few days, the University of Illinois and Wuhan University will sign a cooperation agreement in Illinois, and soon, I expect to sign a more specific agreement between SIM and GSLIS,

¹ The quotation and other information in this paragraph comes from Cheryl Boettcher, "Samuel T.Y. Seng and the Boone Library School," *Libraries & Culture* 24.3 (Summer 1989), pp. 269-294.]

that will make it easier for students from SIM to come to GSLIS, and easier for faculty at both institutions to work together. Finally, I speak for all of the iSchools when I say that each of us, in our own way, looks forward to “a century of continuity” (Shao-ch’i) in our collaborations with Wuhan University and its School of Information Management, in the spirit of Samuel Seng.