

April 2011

# Back Talk -- "What a difference a day makes:" The WEB and Digital Publishing in Hong Kong

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### Recommended Citation

Ferguson, Anthony (Tony) W. (2011) "Back Talk -- "What a difference a day makes:" The WEB and Digital Publishing in Hong Kong," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 23: Iss. 2, Article 13.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.5790>

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links to blogs, tips on writing a business plan in the United Kingdom, and many other constructive resources.

### 9. Management Issues

**Entrepreneur Magazine's Management Advice & Guides** — [www.entrepreneur.com/management/index.html](http://www.entrepreneur.com/management/index.html) — Even the most astute practitioners in any field seek out some advice occasionally, and business managers should be no exception. When stumbling through the information jungle that is the Web, however, a lot of the advice, particularly the free advice, may range from questionable to the outright loopy. Fortunately, there are some excellent free resources available online, among them **Entrepreneur Magazine's Management Advice & Guides**. This group of articles offers quick, effective how-to advice on general management issues, legal problems, operations, human resources, and much more.

**Free Management Library** — <http://managementhelp.org> — If you prefer a second opinion, try **Free Management Library**, a free management advice site originally sponsored by the Management Assistance Program (MAP) for Nonprofits of St. Paul, Minnesota, but now operating independently. The **Free Management Library** offers advice on over 650 topics through links to Wiki-like contributors. None of the links on this site are allowed to ask for a separate registration, none may charge for information, and all must offer substantive information on the topic.

### 10. Human Resources & Labor

**Workforce Online** — <http://www.workforce.com> — Every business is, ultimately, about people, so constructive advice and pertinent resources to help deal with human resource issues are always valuable commodities. A great place to prospect for HR advice is **Workforce Online**, which provides a surprisingly wide array of resources covering a large number of topics in human resources and labor. Their Research Center supplies a searchable database containing thousands of articles, while the Community Center offers forums and networks to connect with HR professionals. The site also includes HR news items from across the country, and a good directory to HR services and vendors. Registration is required to use some of the resources, but the registration is free.

**HR Tools** — <http://www.hrtools.com/> — Another extremely useful site is **HR Tools**, a largely free site providing support in all areas of Human Resource practice, including hiring, benefits & compensation, training, leadership, policies, and law. Each section (many with numerous subsections) offers articles, guides, checklists, forms, and more. There is legal advice, HR news, and opinion pieces on virtually every topic. As with virtually any "free" site, if you drill down deep enough you get to some paid resources, but much of the site is truly free, and truly helpful.

And so forth...

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The few resources described above should provide a useful stepstool to the broader world of effective Internet business research on the cheap. Clearly, it is only the bare beginning. To find more sites, you can simply place your topic in any major search engine and sort laboriously through the results. You can also try the sites below, which will supply you with a generous collection of links to many more free business research resources on the Web:

**Library of Congress Business Reference Services: BEOnline Internet Subject Guides** — <http://www.loc.gov/rr/business/beonline/subjectlist.php> — The **Library of Congress** started the BEOnline project in 1996 to provide a rich supply of research resources available online. BEOnline now offers Subject Guides on roughly 90 topics in business research, updated on a regular basis. It is basically just a big list of links available by subject or alphabetically by name, but it has been presorted for you, and is definitely easier than rummaging through thousands of random Web pages.

**New York Public Library – Best of the Web: Business & Finance** — <http://www.nypl.org/weblinks/1358> — You might also



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try the **New York Public Library's Best of the Web: Business & Finance**. It is a good collection of sites, organized by both topic and site name, but perhaps more selectively chosen than those at the **Library of Congress**. It includes many commonly sought types of business information, including some good leads on finding data & statistics. **NYPL** also offers resources for entrepreneurs and small business start-ups, and some good links to federal documents and free legal research resources.

And there you have it — not an end in itself, by any means, but at least a good start on carrying out free yet effective business research. It is my sincere hope that this turns out to be one of those rare cases in which free advice is worth a lot more than what you paid for it. 🐼

### Back Talk from page 86

#### Endnotes

1. At a meeting held in conjunction with the **2011 Online Information Asia-Pacific** meeting in Hong Kong. See <http://www.online-information.asia/>.
2. **Wikipedia**. This well known song was written originally in Spanish by the Mexican composer **Maria Mendez Grever**, but later popularized when it was rendered in English by **Stanley Adams** and sung by the likes of **Dinah Washington, Sarah Vaughn, Diana Ross, Aretha Franklin, Tony Bennett** and others: See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/What\\_a\\_Diff'rence\\_a\\_Day\\_Made#Song\\_information](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/What_a_Diff'rence_a_Day_Made#Song_information).
3. While the Chinese and Koreans had employed wood block printing for several hundreds of years prior to the invention of moveable type for the printing of religious and philosophical texts, it was not until the turn of the first millennium that the alchemist **Pi Sheng** perfected the technology for engraving single characters on thousands of small character blocks and then gluing them to iron sheets for printing. See the following Website for additional information about early printing in China: <http://www.computersmiths.com/chineseinvention/movtype.htm>. **Gutenberg**, in the early 1440's developed moveable metal type. See the following for more information: <http://inventors.about.com/od/gstartinventors/a/Gutenberg.htm>.

# Back Talk — “What a difference a day makes:” The WEB and Digital Publishing in Hong Kong

Column Editor: **Anthony (Tony) W. Ferguson** (Library Director, University of Hong Kong; Phone: 852 2859 2200; Fax: 852 2858 9420) <ferguson@hkucc.hku.hk>

My colleague **Angela Ko** and I were recently asked to talk about publishing in contemporary Hong Kong.<sup>1</sup> As I thought about how to convey in this column our findings, the title of the romantic ballad “What a Difference a Day Makes,” with which **Dinah Washington** won a Grammy in 1959, kept coming into my mind. My initial reasoning was that, what a difference the span of only ten years has made in the nature of publishing, that so much has happened in such a short amount of time. Yet, when I **Google’d** the song’s title so that I could talk further about what a difference this span of time has meant, I discovered that the lyrics clearly indicated that the difference was not the short time span of only 24 hours, but because of the person with whom the singer had spent the day: “And the difference is you.” While I was initially nonplussed, as I thought about it, the difference was, like the ballad, not a function of the time spent, but because of the other person, in this case the other entity, the WEB, which made the difference.<sup>2</sup>

The WEB has forever changed the nature of publishing in this little corner of China just as movable type printing (engraved clay pieces glued to sheets of iron), which was invented as early as the **Ching-Li** period of Chinese history, 1041-1048, changed the flow of information about China’s rich culture nearly one thousand years ago.<sup>3</sup> While printed books still abound here, digital publishing is already big in Hong Kong and is making a big difference in how information is shared.

Just as the early wood block and later moveable clay type printing was used for communicating religious and philosophical texts, one of the earliest

uses of digital publishing in Hong Kong was the digitization of the *Si Ku Quan Shu*, a 36,000 volume collection of important texts first brought together by the Qing Dynasty **Emperor Qian-lung** in the late 1700’s. Initially we bought digital texts like this on CD-ROMs, but now our library and others provide readers with WEB based text versions of these Chinese classics.

Now however, perhaps some of the most used electronic sources of information in Hong Kong are news sources. Hong Kong has a full-text database, **WiseNews**, compiled from more than 1,600 news sources including newspapers, Websites, etc. They claim that more than 200,000 new articles are added daily dealing with everything Chinese. Moreover, Hong Kong is still a city whose people love to read newspapers. Accordingly, we now have 13 daily electronic newspapers in Chinese and two in English which must be purchased. There are also four Chinese and two free English newspapers for everyone to enjoy. Finally, since business in China is important to the success of this commercial capital, it is not surprising that there are also a host of other electronic news sources like *China infoBank*, published in Hong Kong since 1992 to help the business community make its decisions.

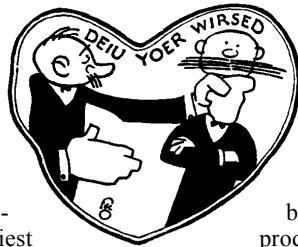
The development of electronic publishing by Hong Kong’s academic presses is growing but uneven. The **University of Hong Kong Press**, for example, has decided that they will be a multi-platform content provider to “anyone, anytime, anywhere, via any media.” Hence, they are not only republishing their backlists, but they are trying to produce eBooks as close to paper

book distribution as possible and they are selling their titles independently as well as through all possible digital content providers. Additionally, they are making headway in the selling paper versions of their eBooks via print-on-demand services like **Lightning Source International**. The other academic presses in Hong Kong are a bit behind **HKU Press** but they are all making progress. In addition to Hong Kong’s academic presses selling eBooks, all provide free content on the Web. **HKU Press**, for example, has developed a core set of texts for the use of primary and secondary school teachers and students and these are freely available via the HK Government sponsored **Knowledge Exchange** portal hosted by **HKEdCity**.

Hong Kong’s academic libraries have also been actively engaged in digital publishing. My own library, from which I have just retired, has been involved in a broad range of 29 digital initiatives. We have provided, for example, table of contents information for thousands of books published in or about Hong Kong; we are in the process of providing full text versions of all western language books in our collections published before the end of the Qing Dynasty (1911) about China; we provide, with the permission of local publishers, electronic versions of printed scholarly journals (the **Chinese University of Hong Kong** provides this service as well); and we have digitized collections like the *Hong Kong War Crimes Trials Collection*. The **Chinese University**, **Lingnan University**, **Baptist University**, and the **City University** libraries all have scores of digital projects as well.

Hong Kong’s government, like government printing houses the world over, is also actively engaged in the digital publishing of new materials. So far, it seems as if the various agencies are each doing their own thing without regard to what others are doing, but the amount of digital information that Hong Kong’s citizens can access about is enormous. Similarly, the political parties and action groups in support of or critical of the Government are making full use of the WEB to convey their points of view. China allows Hong Kong under its “One Country – Two Systems” policy to enjoy complete freedom of the press/information and the WEB is a great way of making this all happen.

**Angela** and I concluded our presentation by saying that all parts of Hong Kong’s information institutions are, like the rest of the world, going digital. While it is true that some parts of the system are moving faster than others, yet, it is clear that this is the strategic direction being taken by all parts of the Hong Kong community. 🐼



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endnotes on page 85