



DOUBLE TAKE
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Students reveal the surprising truth
about professional internships

plus

MONSTER MANIA!

The film festival that raises goosebumps

CHILLI CRAB DIPLOMACY

Adding local flavour to ICA 2010

GUTS & STORY

Journalism students push beyond their
comfort zone

THE GRAD BEYOND

Alumni speak up from the other side of
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ON THE COVER:

Come "internship season", WKWSCI undergrads take on double roles as student and professional. During their internships—often their first taste of working life—these Year 3 students sally forth to tackle real-world challenges and return to NTU six months later with a broader and deeper understanding of the communication industry. The cover depicts the double persona of a typical undergrad doing her Professional Internship.

— Created by Chen Wei Li
Model: Christine Tan



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Students coming to the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information can expect to take a wide variety of courses, ranging from conceptual to practical. Indeed, some of the Practicum courses (e.g., The Nanyang Chronicle, Fusion radio, Spectrum TV, and the Public and Promotional Communication Practicum that produces this august publication) are among the most popular courses in the school. All of our courses are designed to prepare students for the future either by providing critical and analytical thinking skills that will help them become life-long learners or industry relevant skills and knowledge that will help them gain a competitive edge in the job market.



One of the most crucial complements to the latter is the Professional Internship (PI) programme all third-year students undertake during their second semester. The quality of the experience can and does vary, but most students gain invaluable experience about how communication industries operate in Singapore and abroad. As many as a quarter of them receive job offers from their internship companies. The cover story and sidebars in this explore the nature of the internship programme, which has become and will continue to be an integral part of the undergraduate experience.

As usual, the magazine contains a lot of news and notes about current faculty and students, and alumni. There's also a story on the upcoming International Communication Association conference that the School will be hosting in June 2010. The conference will be a unique opportunity to showcase the School and Singapore to communication scholars from around the world, and we are very excited about the event. I hope you enjoy this issue of *ConnexSCions*, and look forward to seeing you at upcoming events.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. H. Detenber', written in a cursive style.

Benjamin H. Detenber



Getting to know the H'mong people in Sapa, who are traditionally farmers but have now cashed in on the tourism industry. Children like the ones pictured here often do not attend school but instead earn their keep by selling crafts to tourists.

Guts and Story *Overseas reporting pushes journalism students beyond their comfort zone*

By Elizabeth Law

To a tourist in Vietnam, the country may be a charming throw-back to a bygone era. But to a journalism student such as Natasha Ann Zachariah, Vietnam represents a physical manifestation of journalism.

“Just like how you need guts to survive Hanoi, you need it to survive journalism too,” mused Natasha. The third-year WKWSCI undergraduate was part of a 12-student SOJOURN (Short Overseas Journalism) team that travelled to Hanoi and Sapa for 10 days in September 2009. In Sapa, a mountainous region north of Hanoi, the team’s stamina was put to the test when they had to trek through paddy fields and along the edge of cliffs for their stories.

While the GOFAR (Going Overseas For Advanced Reporting) team in Bangladesh did not do much trekking, they had their own set of challenges. As there are hardly any foreigners in Bangladesh, the

predominantly Chinese team attracted unnerving stares wherever they went.

Challenges Faced

SOJOURN and GOFAR are two of the highlights of the journalism track in WKWSCI, where students get to experience reporting overseas. While SOJOURN focuses solely on travel writing, GOFAR’s emphasis is on feature writing and reporting which is why their group includes a photo and video team.

As the students found out, reporting from a foreign nation is vastly different from reporting at home. The main challenge they faced was the language barrier. This was experienced first hand by Tan Zi Jie, who got ignored by the owner of a bridal boutique in Vietnam because she did not speak the language.

Mohd Zakaria, Editor of the GOFAR magazine,



The conical hat can be seen everywhere in Vietnam.

said he felt that the interviewees' nuances were lost in translation.

"Because we weren't familiar with their culture, it's difficult to know what they mean when they make certain analogies," he explained.

Yet these are precisely the reasons that make the courses so enriching. Mr Andrew Duffy, supervisor of SOJOURN, remarked, "As a journalist, you get challenges thrown at you all the time. How you go around them to get your story... that is the mark of a true journalist."

Both teams even had a close shave with natural disasters. Typhoon Ketsana that hit the Southeast Asia region, including parts of Vietnam, in early October thankfully spared North Vietnam, where the SOJOURN team was headed. Similarly in Bangladesh, the GOFAR team narrowly avoided the flash floods of the monsoon season on both their trips. According to final year student Cheryl Ong, "We were just lucky!"

Experience Gained

For many of the students, simply being in another



Residents of Hanoi, like the rest of Vietnam, mostly depend on motorbikes to get around, much to the bemusement of the team.

country was in itself a learning experience. Final-year student Kong Yen Lin felt that being in Bangladesh showed her how willing people were to open up their lives and share their stories.

Said Yen Lin of her experience, "GOFAR taught me that as long as I search hard enough, I'll definitely be able to find a co-operative subject. A simple 'no'



Fishermen on their way out to sea. Fishing is a main source of revenue for most Bangladeshis, who refer to themselves as “children of the sea”.



A lone boy with his home-made kite.

should never be the end of a lead.”

For the SOJOURN team, Hanoi was an equally eye-opening experience. As most Vietnamese spend a lot of their time on the sidewalks, they do just about everything there, from eating meals to doing their laundry.

As Zi Jie said, “You almost feel like you’re walking into someone’s house. Then you remember that actually you’re on a public pavement.”

It took guts for the students to step out of their comfort zone and unearth the stories buried in the layers of another culture, another country.

“Guts and glory” are often spoken of in the same breath. In these students’ case, it was: No guts, no story. **C**

From GOFAR & Sojourn I learnt that ...



Kong Yen Lin

“... I should be more hopeful and less skeptical of the willingness and kindness of people to share their stories with me. If I search hard enough, I’ll definitely be able to find a cooperative subject. GOFAR taught me that a simple ‘no’ should never be the end of a lead.”



Cheryl Ong (left)

“...Bangladeshis are willing to help complete strangers. Even though they had little, they were willing to share.”



Tan Zi Jie (front)

“... you really need guts for a simple task like crossing the road in Hanoi!”

WKWSCI Facelift

New and improved facilities get the thumbs up from students

By Adeline Tan

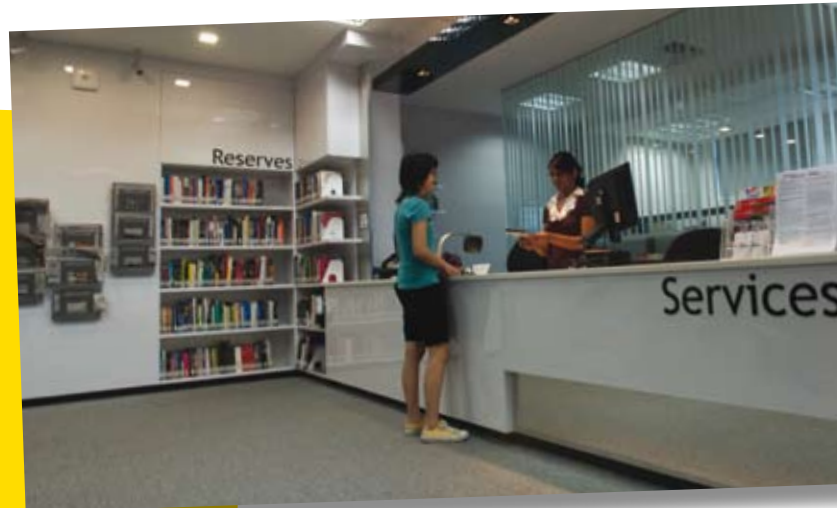
Asian Communication Resource Centre (ACRC) Library

What's Changed

- A student corner with 19" monitors and a viewing area with nine TV sets allows students to watch library videos.
- Students' works are showcased at the entranceway.
- New computers, network printing service and more power points to facilitate laptop use.
- A new service desk with research consultants provides better service, with extended opening hours to 9.30pm in line with the other NTU libraries. A 24-hour return chute allows students to return books after operating hours.

Upcoming

Blu-ray players and a new plasma TV.



Audio Suite

What's Changed

- Two isolated floor areas with windows that allow separate musical instrumental recording as well as vocals.
- The old acoustic wall, ceiling and even the carpet have been replaced with new panels and carpeting.
- New multi-recording systems and surround sound mixing.
- All the audio workstations are now connected to the SANmp server to allow easy audio file transfer amongst work stations.



New Graduate Student Lounge



The lounge allows students to catch a breather, a quick bite or a meeting with friends. Included in the lounge are books, a hot water dispenser, comfy chairs and tables.

New Seminar Rooms

- Seminar Room and Executive Seminar Rooms facilitate graduate courses in the evening.
- Seminar Room 2 has a surround system for undergraduate film studies and cinema studies courses. C



Monster Ma

The film festival that raises goosebumps



perspectives
2009 FESTIVAL



FILM FESTIVAL

2 DAYS, 4 FILMS, & LOTS OF MONSTERS.

23 & 24 OCT 09
MONSTERMANIAFILMFEST.COM

Image courtesy of Arlo Hansen
Movie Mania poster by Elizabeth Lee



Mania!

By Woo Sian Boon

When Year 3 student Tan Jin He logged on to her Facebook account one day, she was puzzled when she found that she had a friend request from a “GiantRadio ActiveLizard” from Odo Island, Japan. A quick check of their 10 mutual friends, however, revealed that Mr GiantRadio was a character which the Film Festival Practicum student committee had created to generate publicity for this year’s WKWSCI film festival, “Monster Mania”.

Perspectives, a practicum that is only into its second year at WKWSCI, aims to expose students to the intricacies of organising a film festival. This year, the student committee decided to organise the festival in conjunction with Halloween—hence the monster theme.

According to “Monster Mania” Manager, third-year student Thaddaeus Wee, the committee had decided on the theme so that friends, family and youths can celebrate Halloween and at the same time be introduced to the pedagogical aspects of horror films.

Thaddaeus added, “We also wanted to evoke some sort of nostalgia. These are monsters and films we watched when we were young, things we might have fond memories of, but rarely hear of today.”

Held on the 23 and 24 October, audiences had the chance to enjoy a range of films in the genres of

“These are monsters and films we watched when we were young, things we might have fond memories of, but rarely hear of today.”

– Monster Mania Manager
Thaddaeus Wee

horror and science fiction.

“Monster Mania” was declared open by Guest-of Honour and renowned local director, Mr Eric Khoo. Then guests were treated to the epic battle between Godzilla and King Ghidorah in the film *Godzilla Vs King Ghidorah* which was screened at Vivocity’s outdoor amphitheatre. The horrific but hilarious *Mighty Peking Man* and *The Little Shop of Horrors* were also concurrently shown at the Golden Village cinemas. The last film to be screened that night was *Nosferatu*, translated as “symphony of horror”. Based on the story of Dracula, it aptly put a close to the two-day “horror fest”.

One of the highlights of the event, however, came at the end of the festival. A 94-minute score specially composed for “Monster Mania” by NTU’s ADM Professor Permagnus Lindborg and two other local musical composers, Derek Wong and Kwong Jie Bao, was performed to mark the ending of the festival.

The score was played by musicians from diverse backgrounds, including a jazz band and renowned pipa player Samuel Wong, who had performed a solo during Singapore’s National Day Parade 2009.

It was clear that the Perspectives students have outdone themselves with regards to the planning and overall execution of “Monster Mania”, setting a high bar for the next film festival committee to reach. C



Award-winning director Mr Eric Khoo addresses the crowd during the opening ceremony, with Dr Adam Joel Knee, Division Head of EDM, looking on.



Pedro Shiu, Monster Mania’s Chief Programmer, advertises the event.

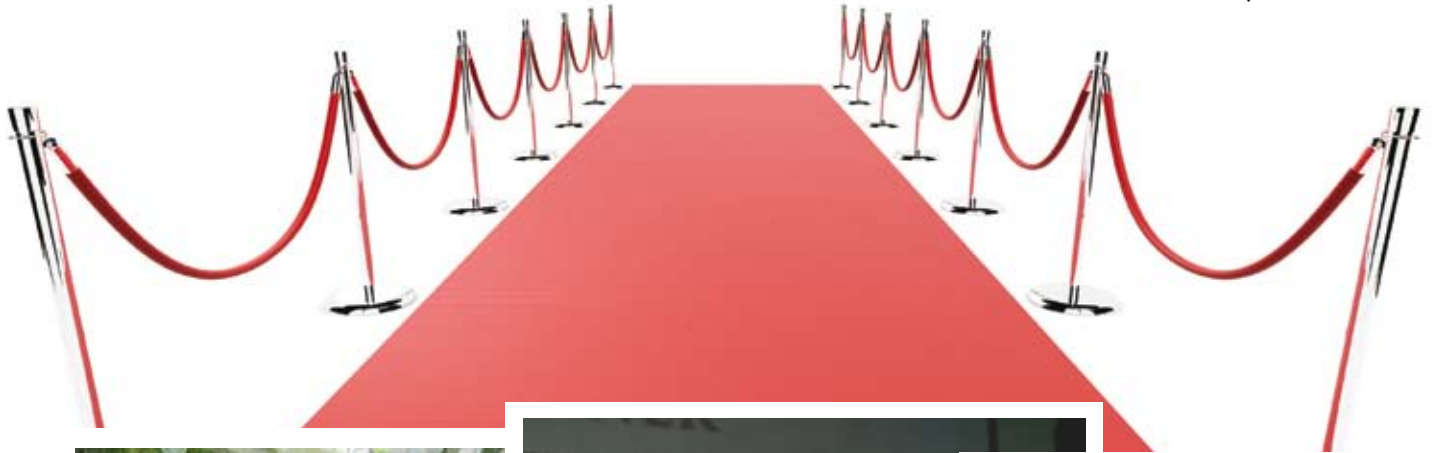


Members of the festival’s committee admiring their hard work.

The Red Carpet

We salute our students and alumni for their outstanding awards this year!

By Adeline Tan



FYP Group Justin Zhuang, Wong Shu Yun, Sam Kang Li, Serena Cheong, Class of 2008

Award: Foreign Correspondents Association of Singapore's Multimedia Journalism Prize 2009 for "Barber at the Alley"

How They Won: They combined photography, journalism and video to portray a unique side of Singapore in their final year project, "Reclaim Land". Their aim was to show how ordinary Singaporeans create their own place despite the lack of physical space here. Using videos, audio, text and photography, they showed how 70-year-old Barber Lee had to close his salon due to rent hikes. But he refused to give up and instead reclaimed a back alley to continue his business.

What it Means to Them: "The stories we found have made us realise that people of the nation have the power to redefine the country."



Lynette Khoo, *The Business Times* journalist & Class of 2006 alumnus

Award: Most Promising Journalist of The Year (2009) at the 10th Investors' Choice Awards

How She Won: After graduating from WKWSCI, Lynette went on to pursue her dream of becoming a journalist. Her undying passion and determination as a journalist in *The Business Times* won her the accolade in this year's 10th Investors' Choice Awards.

What it Means to Her: "I'm thankful for the nomination and the opportunities given to me. At the end of the day, I hope readers will benefit from my work. What continues to drive me in this profession is the value of telling the stories behind the numbers and presenting relevant facts that are beneficial to my readers."



Liew Shi Xiong, Year 4

Recognition: Finalist in CNN's Asia-Pacific Screen Awards for "Bird that Shakes the Jute Fields"

How He Won: During his GOFAR experience in Bangladesh earlier this August, he put together a montage of moving images and sounds he recorded off the streets of Dhaka, as well as the vocals of a local guide who sang a popular Bengali folk song. With only images and the simple folk song, the film "Bird that Shakes the Jute Fields" managed to highlight the beauty and warmth of Dhaka.

What it Means to Him: "It's nothing big, but it's a good encouragement. It tells me: Boy, go chase after your dreams. So what if I get badly bruised along the way, at least I grow to learn more about myself and this world."



Trinetta Chong, Year 3
Award: Ureka Gold Award 2009

How She Won: Encouraged by her professor Dr May O. Lwin, Trinetta had embarked on a research project linking facial recognition with aromas. The objective was to find out if matching a scent to a face makes the face more memorable. Taking her research to the next level, Trinetta joined the URECA competition (Undergraduate Research Experience on Campus) and presented her research idea to a panel of judges at an exhibition, leading to her Gold award.

What it Means to Her: “The award is just a bonus; the whole URECA process was good in the sense that I learnt about how to do research and I became more disciplined and more independent.”



Wang Wei Yang, Year 4
Award: Best of Advertising at Crowbar Award 2009 for “Your Life Soundtrack”

How He Won: Wei Yang and friend Brendan Graham came up with a novel concept when tasked to make the London Philharmonic Orchestra relatable to London youths aged 16 to 24—they came up with “Your Life Soundtrack”. The idea combines the online platform with orchestra music. It tracks personal thoughts and feelings posted by youths online and creates a personal playlist of London Philharmonic music that reflects the youths’ emotions.

What it Means to Him: “This has been inspirational. Brendan’s approach to advertising is refreshing and working together has made us more open to ideas.”



Janice Tan, Year 3
Award: Executive Development Scholarship (EDS) 2009

How She Won: While her peers were busy mugging for exams last November, Janice launched her own Tapas bar. Within less than a year, she was awarded the Executive Development Scholarship by Spring Singapore for her passion for business, strong leadership abilities and outstanding entrepreneurship spirit.

What it Means to Her: “The scholarship allows us to network and learn from the experiences of established SME leaders in Singapore. Through their trials and successes, I will be able to better appreciate the nature of starting and maintaining a business locally.” C

TAIWAN FESTIVAL PICKS

Some call them the Dream Team of EBM: JJ, Daren, Johnson and Guang Zheng set up Derail Productions while still students at WKWSCI, producing such award-winning films as *Half* and *莫声* (Silent). In a swansong coup, the foursome’s FYP film was picked up for screening at 2009 Taiwan Youth Film and Video Festival earlier this May.

聚丧 – *The Funeral* is a 30-minute drama revolving around relationships, communication and religion. It is a story about how the death of the youngest brother in a family brings together his elder sister and brother, each with a different set of religious beliefs. In the process, the siblings struggle to come to terms with their differences and indifference towards each other’s lives.

The team has always strived to make films that boldly explore complex issues. This time while brainstorming ideas involving local taboos, they decided to use a funeral to highlight issues on religious differences within a family.

“Religion is very poignant in our society but no one talks

UP DREAM TEAM’S FILM

about it in great depth,” said an enigmatic Guang Zheng. “The film is not (just) about a funeral. That is a container by which our message is delivered.”

Pre-production saw them in intensive talks with funeral and religious experts so that they could stage a realistic funeral. With a budget that had to stretch to include hiring professional crew and cast at industry rates, the team supplemented the costs with income from producing corporate videos. A bonus was funding from the Singapore Film Commission—secured with their outstanding portfolio.

Participating in the vibrant Taiwan Festival allowed them to “learn a lot about their film culture and watch many interesting and thought-provoking student short films”. Guang Zheng gives credit to their FYP supervisor Nikki and teammates in *The Funeral*, “It is to their credit that we managed to pull the film off successfully and along the way learnt more about ourselves.”

Young Entrepreneurs

By Christine Tan

Academic commitments prove no obstacle for these intrepid student entrepreneurs

Guts? Check. Determination? Check. Business background? Not necessary... just do it! This seems to be the gung-ho attitude of WKWSCl students who are developing their passion into money-generating businesses despite hectic school schedules. *ConnexSCIons* caught up with Janice Tan, Chen Wei Li and Gerald Tan to find out what makes them—and their businesses—tick.

From where did your passion originate?

WL: I was fortunate enough to be posted to *Pioneer* magazine to be a writer/photographer while serving my National Service. On one occasion, I was deployed to northern Thailand to cover the humanitarian missions of the SAF. It was during this mission that I realised that I thoroughly enjoyed the use of photography to capture important moments. It made me take photography more seriously than the average hobbyist.

JT: My brother who came back from a backpacking trip told me about the Spanish concept of giving out free tapas with every drink bought. It made me realise why people go backpacking—because of the friendships forged and the freedom and laid-back nature of travelling that way. I felt motivated to recreate this feel in Singapore because we are always so uptight and mistrusting. I figured that food and drinks would help ease people into this attitude as well.

GT: I have always enjoyed cooking, and it has always been one of my dreams to own a restaurant—that and a supermarket. One thing I love is breakfast, and in particular eggs, but being the sort that wakes up late on the weekends I could never find a restaurant to satisfy my craving for good breakfast food in the afternoon or night. That's when I knew I wanted to start an all-day breakfast place that showcases the versatility of eggs.

How did the passion evolve into a business?

WL: I bumped into an old secondary school friend who shared the same ambitions as me in terms of wanting to make an impact in the world of photography. Together with a third business partner, we came up with Intrigue Visuals. It puts us in a position far more advantageous than most solo upstarts have in terms of business.

JT: I think the passion evolved into a business because of support from my family. And most importantly, I kept going because there were so many cynics that thought it was going to fail. So in a way, I pushed for this because I wanted to prove that I could really get the job done.

GT: Waking up one late afternoon craving breakfast food—that's when I knew I wanted to start this business.

What gives you job satisfaction?

WL: There is this adrenaline every time I take on a big job and at the end of the day, the results coupled with the adrenaline translates to a lot of satisfaction.

JT: Customers are an amazing source of job satisfaction. The nice ones will tell you what a fantastic job you've done with the place, and even invite you to sit down to chat. And that really was the point of the bar, to have people feel comfortable enough to start conversations and friendships with strangers.

GT: There have been many, from the point when the signage was fixed, to the very first customer, to customers complimenting you on the best pancakes or Eggs Benedict they've ever had. The job is definitely a tiring one, but I am passionate about it, so every minute has been satisfying thus far.

Can you describe your foray into business?

WL: It is a mixture of both bitter-sweetness and awesomeness, simply because we've had so much fun throughout the course of our work and shooting, yet it can be tough. We also cannot deny the fact that stiff competition coupled with the bad economy have painted a gloomy outlook.

JT: Awesome definitely! It's been a difficult journey every step of the way, but I'm a person who loves challenges. If it's not difficult, it's not worth doing. If I waited till I graduated and didn't have both work and school to juggle, it wouldn't have been half as fun!

GT: Response has been encouraging. One difficulty would be changing the mindset of people—that breakfast food can be enjoyed on a weekday night. In fact, we do offer many items that are definitely suitable for dinner, like steak and sausage platters and many more.

Has your WKWSCl background benefitted your business in any way?

WL: I have the school to thank because it was during this time, especially while I was with the *Nanyang Chronicle*, that I became more focussed as to which area (or what genre) of photography I really wanted to do. It also helps that, while shooting for *Chronicle*, I met with many people from all walks of life. Some of them eventually became my clients.

JT: WKWSCl taught me a lot about how to communicate effectively with customers. I also had a miniscule marketing budget to work with, so learning about alternative ways of communicating without busting big bucks on traditional advertising was important.

GT: Before starting this, I definitely had to put in my time to conduct some research. We touched a bit about branding in school—it is definitely a good platform for me to see how I can actually brand Hatched. **C**



CHEN WEI LI

Year 4 undergrad specialising in Journalism

Business: Intrigue Visuals (co-owned with friends)

Describing themselves as a “bunch of youngsters who dare to dream big... (and) believes in delivering creative and reliable solutions to clients”, Wei Li and his friends do commercial photography and video production. Already they have clients such as Shaw, Unilever, Water & Wine, St James Powerstation and Biotherme Homme in their portfolio. Wei Li's photographic work on afro-caribbean salsa dancing received honourable mention in an international photography competition that saw more than 20,000 entries.

<http://www.intriguevisuals.com.sg/>



JANICE TAN

Year 3 undergraduate specialising in Advertising and Public Relations

Business: The Zsofi Tapas Bar (co-owned with her brother)

The hip bar, which has already been featured in *ST Lifestyle*, *Omy.sg*, *SoShiok.com* and *IS* magazine, was named after a woman whom Janice's brother met on a trip to Spain. It prides itself in serving up an authentic tapas culture, where every regular drink bought comes with free tapas.

<http://www.tapasbar.com.sg/>



GERALD TAN

Class of 2005, specialising in Communication Research

Business: Hatched (co-owned with friends)

The café was inspired by the owners' favourite meal of the day—breakfast. The all-day breakfast eatery serves up eggs in every style and manner including baked, boiled, fried, poached and scrambled. There was nothing half-boiled about the response to the café during its soft launch, Happy Hatched Day, though. Hatched received the thumbs-up from customers for its pancakes and Burly Benedict—corned wagyu beef, poached egg, served with mornay sauce, sautéed potatoes with caramelised onions.

<http://www.hatched.sg/>

Green Piece

WKWSCl student represents Singapore in Youth for Earth efforts

By Christine Tan

Going the extra mile to save the earth may merely be lip service for some, but Pedro Shiu was determined to take it literally.

The Year 2 WKWSCl student was one of three youths who represented Singapore in the international DENSO YOUTH for EARTH Action: New Earthlings Project in Thailand and Japan this year. The annual programme is a collaborative effort by

Denso Corporation and the Japan Environmental Education Forum, with support from the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (UNEP ROAP) and the United Nations University Institute of Advanced Studies.

This was the first year that Singapore students participated in the programme since its inception in 2008. They joined 27 other

selected youths from Japan and other ASEAN countries in the programme, which aimed to “teach young people... about creating a sustainable society that enables humans to coexist with the environment and to connect that to their own activities”.

From July to October, the youths toured Thailand and Japan, after which they made a presentation and discussed the country’s environmental efforts.

Pedro returned with rich insights. Impressed by the Vietnam student’s presentation, which revealed that recycling was widespread in Vietnam, Pedro said, “I was surprised to know that citizens were the force behind the environmental efforts in countries which are

He joined 27 selected youths from ASEAN to spread the word on building a sustainable society.

less developed than Singapore. Here it is mainly the government telling corporations and citizens what to do and what to implement. Singapore residents are, more often than not, apathetic and reactive rather than pro-active.”

The proposal that he presented in Japan recommended creating a co-curricular activity (CCA) on environmental conservation. Youths would then be able to do their part for Mother Nature while earning CCA points and Community Involvement Project (CIP) hours.

If successful, the Singapore Zoological Gardens and Singapore Press Holdings would be roped in as partnering organisations, and the CCA would be introduced in all educational institutions, including NTU.

Inspired by the Denso programme, Pedro plans to ignite a passion for the environment among all Singaporeans. In this case, “going the extra mile” means looking no further than our own backyard. **C**



View Finder

Visiting professors weigh in on the future of new media

By Elizabeth Law



Professor Rice dispelled the myth of human disconnect arising from technology, pointing out that the exact same thing was said about telephones when they were first invented.

From left: Professor Victor Mosco, Professor Ronald E. Rice and Professor Georgette Wang

We cannot accurately predict the future of the media until we experience it, concluded the three visiting professors after their roundtable discussion on 27 August 2009. However, students and graduates of WKWSCI are in a good position to adapt quickly to shifts in communication trends.

Shaw Foundation Professor Vincent Mosco, Nanyang Professor Ronald E. Rice and Wee Kim Wee Professor Georgette Wang illuminated, entertained and challenged attendees at the rousing two-hour roundtable discussion.

As leading voices in new media, the three professors raised thought-provoking issues, ranging from Internet implications to the role of mobile technology in communication development.

The professors had been invited to WKWSCI under the Distinguished Professors Programme.

Professor Wang, who specialises in the study of mobile technology, observed that students and graduates of WKWSCI are in a good position to capture the market when it gains momentum.

“There will be a demand for mobile content in the region and students of this School are perfectly positioned to provide that.”

Observations that humans may become increasingly disconnected from one another with the advent of technology were dispelled by Professor Rice, who pointed out that the exact same thing was said about telephones when they were first invented.

He added that the Internet is actually making people more social since most of the growing websites

are social networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn.

On the other hand, Professor Mosco noted that there should be some form of regulation on the Internet though it should be a collective effort. Putting the responsibility of regulation in the hands of just one party may lead to adverse effects.

Year 2 student Goh Kai Shi agreed, saying, “The Internet is one of the few platforms for free expression left in society today. It is a very powerful tool that shouldn’t fall into the wrong hands.”

Many students found the roundtable discussion insightful. Year 4 undergraduate Mohd Zakaria said, “It is very enriching hearing about the future from people who have observed it from a scientific point of view.” C

Chilli Crab Diplomacy



The dynamism of the circular logo and its reference to yin/yang resonates with Eastern values. Red and saffron are the main colours of the logo, with red representing readiness and warmth, while saffron recalls the colour of a monk's robes.



The WKWSCI contingent at this year's conference in Chicago promoting ICA 2010 with gifts of chilli crab stuffed toys.

While Singaporeans were celebrating last year over news of the country winning the Youth Olympics bid, another prestigious bid was quietly under way. And to Singapore's credit, we won that bid too.

In June 2010, the International Communication Association's (ICA) annual conference comes to Singapore for the first time in 60 years. Known internationally for its far-reaching communication initiatives, ICA is an internationally respected communication association which holds conferences annually in order for academics all over the world to network and learn from each other.

In a collaborative effort with the Singapore Tourism Board (STB), WKWSCI clinched the opportunity to welcome world-renowned communication academics to our shores.

"We faced many challenges during the pitching process. Some of these included the stringent media laws in Singapore," said Prof Ang Peng Hwa, Singapore's ICA committee Chairperson. "However, we garnered strong institutional support and the fact that ICA was willing to come to Singapore showed that the system in Singapore is not entirely

restrictive despite the Association recognising such media constraints. This also allows the School to achieve a high level of recognition in the international community."

ICA, which is headquartered in Washington DC, typically holds its conferences in New York, California and other American cities. Of late, however, ICA has taken its conferences to international venues every four years. ICA 2010 will be held at the Suntec City Convention Centre from 22 to 26 of June 2010.

Selling the Singapore Flavour

Preparations for ICA 2010 are busily under way. Led by Prof Ang, the committee consisting of WKWSCI academics Dr May Lwin, Dr Cherian George, Dr KC Yeoh, Dr Fernando Paragas and Mr Tim Clark, are working on the ICA 2010 logo, website and collaterals to create awareness for the event.

Publicity efforts started early this year in fact, with a WKWSCI contingent travelling to ICA 2009 in Chicago to promote the 2010 conference. The team brought along with them chilli crab stuffed toys to promote Singapore's unique flavour.

Adding local flavour to ICA 2010 By Cathryn Neo



Souvenirs with a Uniquely Singapore flavour were given out to showcase the country.

Ms Yeo Su Lin, a PhD student at WKWSCI, who assisted in coordinating the Singapore exhibition booth in Chicago, said, “It was easy getting people excited about the conference but many we have spoken to hesitate to come due to financial reasons especially during this economic crisis. Therefore, we have come up with special tour packages to make it more worthwhile for the foreign delegates to visit the region while they are in Singapore.”

The Singapore booth received plenty of foot traffic as it was located in a prominent position just next to the main door. This also posed an interesting problem for the team as many visitors assumed it was the registration booth!

According to Dr May Lwin, who co-heads the publicity sub committee, ICA 2010 also aims to attract greater numbers of Asian delegates. With WKWSCI ambassadors going to Asian regions such as Bangkok and Philippines to promote ICA 2010, the committee believes that more delegates from non-English speaking countries may join the conference.

Prof Ang believes that this conference will not only provide academics with the chance to present their papers, but will also give WKWSCI graduate students and alumni the rare opportunity to network with top academics for a possible research partnership or in their planning of further studies.

The ICA 2010 is not the only conference that the School is hosting next year. Also in the pipeline is the Annual International Conference by the Asian Media Information and Communication Centre from the 20 to 23 June. Together, the conferences are already creating a buzz of anticipation in communication circles. **C**

DID YOU KNOW...

- Dr KC Yeoh, chief designer of the ICA 2010 logo, was inspired by the facial contours of the cleaning lady in School in his rendition of androgynous profiles in the logo!
- WKWSCI delegates to this year's ICA conference in Chicago not only brought chilli crab stuffed toys to promote Singapore's flavour, they also brought samples of Tiger Balm to tell the Singapore story.
- ICA 2010 will only be the second time ICA comes to Asia. WKWSCI hopes to set this conference apart from previous ones by incorporating Asian themes.



ICA 2010 FAST FACTS

- **Theme:** Matters of Communication: Political, Cultural & Technological Challenges
- **Venue:** Suntec City Convention Centre
- **Date:** 22-26 June 2010
- **Online registration** will open from Feb 2010 to May 2010. Students will be entitled to a discounted fee which will be published on the ICA 2010 website when registration opens.
 - o Early bird registration fee: US\$125
 - o On-location registration fee: US\$350

For more information, log on to <http://ica2010.sg>

DOUBLE TAKE

Students reveal the surprising truth about professional internships

Advertising undergrad Timothy Liew's internship at an ad agency played out like a dream: "My boss Mr Lim would bring me to his meetings with the client so that I could listen to the brief, take notes and ask questions. When we got back to the office, his usual words would be, 'You've heard the client brief, you've asked the necessary questions, so you should know what the client wants. You're now at point A, how you get to point B is totally up to you.'"

Timothy was at first struck with terror at the words, but Mr Lim's trust in him gave him confidence and ultimately invaluable lessons. Timothy said, "I struggled quite a lot at the beginning, but eventually realised that I would not have learnt so much otherwise."

Of course, not all internship stories are this glowing.

When Trina Tan interned at a small firm, she was mistakenly introduced as "Tricia" through an administrative error. "As a result my work e-mail and name card bore the name 'Tricia,'" she said wryly. "It caused a lot of confusion, to say the least." But when Trina notified her boss, he burst out, "If the database has listed you as Tricia, why can't you just be Tricia! It's too much effort to change it! Now please don't bother me because I have a lot of deadlines to meet!"

Internship "horror stories" make their rounds along with an equal number of feel-good stories. And there is no doubt that a student's first brush with practical work experience can be a shock to the system.

Yet when *ConnexSCions* asked WKWSCI students and alumni if they would re-live their internship experiences—"horror stories" and all—everyone replied with a resolute "yes". And for good reason.

Associate Professor Lee Chun Wah, who coordinates the School's professional internship (PI) programme, points out that the mandatory 24-week internship for WKWSCI undergrads has not only been the highlight of their undergraduate years but is also a key factor in their job search after graduation, saying, "It is a good entry in their job resume to showcase their internship training."



DOUBLE TAKE

By Geraldine Tan, Beatrice Lau, Lim Pei Yi and Beatrice Mok



Learning about the Market

In today's competitive marketplace, it is increasingly common for companies to require internship experience before considering a new hire.

Industry watchers have also noted that Singapore is preparing herself to become a major hub for international media players.

The Economic Development Board has already announced its plans to develop the growth of the local media industry through greater innovation and R&D at Mediapolis@One-north.

With major developmental shifts in the pipeline, the media talent pool in Singapore needs to be groomed and equipped for upcoming challenges and opportunities.

WKWSC being a prominent communication school, has responded to these industry developments by ensuring that each batch of students is sent on internships, either local or global, in order to meet the increasing standards of media talent in Asia.

"The internship is a valuable way for students to connect with the media industry and for our industry partners to provide students with relevant experiences," said Dr Lee.

Regular changes are made to WKWSC's PI programme to ensure that it stays relevant to the ever-changing demands of the media market in Singapore. "Over the years, steps have been made to increase the scope beyond the traditional four major disciplines—Journalism, Broadcast, Public and Promotional Communications, Communication Research—to related areas such as Marketing Communication, Relationship Management, Market Research, Healthcare Communication and more," said Dr Lee.

The number of companies on the WKWSCI internship programme list has also been increased, and the School currently boasts a database of 600 partner companies. Small-medium enterprises (SMEs) are included alongside the traditional multi-national corporations (MNCs) to keep the database balanced. The number of companies in the list is moderated each year based on industry trends, students' preferences as well as demand and supply.

Learning about the Job

The WKWSCI internships, which last for six months, are long enough to instill a sense of working life in general, and to paint a picture of life within specific industries, enabling students to make more informed choices about their career upon graduation.

Internships may very well assist students in deciding where their true passion or calling is in the industry.

Lee Wei Yi, a PPC graduate, believes that being subjected to the pressures of work and deadlines gives students a more precise perception of working life. In addition, internships hone students' interpersonal skills – highly valued by industries such as media and PR, where employees are required to liaise extensively with many different clients.

In terms of employability, a graduate who has had internship experience definitely has an edge in the job market, noted EBM grad Joanna Koo. With real experience under his or her belt, a fresh hire is better prepared for real work situations and can provide his or her employer with support and solutions.

Soft skills picked up during internship is another plus. Wei Yi, who interned in Shanghai with *SH* magazine, found herself interviewing people from all walks of life, including a bouncer, a diver, and a visually impaired foot masseur. In the process she learnt to interact with different people and engage them in conversation.



PASS

Tips on maximising the
from WKWSCI students
done that

“Be humble and grab every opportunity to learn!”

– *Chen Jing Ting, Journalism, interned at My Paper (SH)*

Similarly recent WKWSCI grad Teo Jing Ting, who interned at MediaCorp, honed her interpersonal skills when she had to liaise with foreign and local artistes. It also gave her the opportunity to brush up on her Mandarin!

In the small but dynamic and competitive media industry, a good network of contacts made also gives fresh grads a competitive advantage.

Learning about Yourself

In the end, however, it is not the plethora of practical purposes—skills and knowledge—that makes an internship stick in the students' minds but the enriching experience itself. Many have enjoyed the vivid process of learning on the job and all those whom *ConnexSCIONS* spoke to still keep in touch with their internship company.

"Horror stories" aside, feedback on the PI programme, from both students and employers, has been overwhelmingly positive.

"Don't treat it like an internship but like a real job—the enthusiasm level you put in will be very different. Also, observe what others are doing as you never know when these skills you pick up through observation will come in useful."

– Darell Tea, PPC (Public Relations), interned at the National Heritage Board

"Don't treat yourself as 'just an intern' or others will see you as one too."

– Lynnette Lee, CR and Advertising, interned at the Singapore Youth Olympic Games Organising Committee

"Ask questions, and never be afraid of making mistakes as it is part of the learning process."

– Justin Chai, PPC (Advertising), interned at Publicis

"Maintain good relations with your company so that you can still freelance for them or even work fulltime with them after your internship. It can also help you establish a good network of contacts."

– Thia Shi Hui, EBM, interned at Blk A Pictures

"Go overseas for your internship, and while you are there, explore the country and absorb the culture as much as you can."

– Deanna Tan, EBM, interned at Fierce Design in Shanghai, China

"Before you start, have a goal of what you want to achieve at the end of your internship, and work towards that goal throughout your stint there."

– Charlene Tan, Journalism, interned at Jobsfactory

5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT PROFESSIONAL INTERNSHIP

- #1** Launched in 1996/97, the Professional Internship (PI) was launched as an integral part of WKWSCI's undergraduate curriculum. It is a valuable way for students to connect with the industry and for our industry partners to provide students with relevant industry experience.
- #2** Regular changes are made to the PI, such as increasing the scope beyond the traditional four major disciplines (JP, BCS, PPC, CR) to other related areas such as Marcomm, relationship management, public communication, corporate communication, market research, healthcare communication and more. Changes are also made to the PI report, regular work-logbook submissions, and supervisor evaluations.
- #3** The PI's key component is its 24-week duration (about six months). It is long enough to instill some sense of realism about working life and also enable students to make an informed choice about their eventual career plan.
- #4** In selecting internship companies for students, the School tries to accommodate students' preferences. Of course, the PI company must be in a business area that is broadly within the School's curriculum coverage.
- #5** A database of at least 600 companies is the number the School works on. This is moderated according to the industry situation, demand and supply, and students' preferences. There is no fixed number as such. WKWSCI also tries to include SMEs in addition to traditional MNCs.

"I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing now (if not for the internship)," said Joanna, who is now in a broadcast media company. She had interned in a local production company.

Another recent graduate Wong Kai Xuan, also followed her calling after completing her internship with a radio station in China. She is now in the broadcast industry.

What sets WKWSCI's PI programme apart from other schools is that students are free to explore an internship that is of a different track from their specialisation. Partner companies generally welcome students from different tracks. With this freedom to explore their options, students are relieved of the pressure to decide their 'future destiny' prematurely.

When it comes down to a vote, the professional internship programme wins hands down as the single most valuable learning experience for WKWSCI students.



To Go or Not to Go?

Does an overseas internship really give students an edge?

Firstly, let's have a round of applause for the brave souls of WKWSCI who have ventured beyond Singapore in search of an alternative experience for their internship. They chose the road less travelled, as the majority of each cohort opts for an organisation offered on the School's list of partner companies in Singapore.

There are a number of uncertainties in working overseas, chiefly relating to the unfamiliar living environment as well as differences in work culture.

There have been cases of students who have worked without an assurance of a pay cheque. Others who did receive remuneration have reported significantly lower pay than their peers back home.

ConnexSCIons asked Assoc Prof Dr Lee Chun Wah if employers generally prefer students who have interned locally or overseas.

"That depends on the employer's business focus and preferences," replied Dr Lee. "The PI is an initial training ground, not a definite roadmap. The important thing is to learn from the PI experience."

What, then, is the attraction of overseas internship?

Novelty and adventure appear to be the common factors. "I felt that I had to see beyond the shores of Singapore for opportunities," said Year 4 EBM student Regina Tan.

Her view was echoed by undergrad Joyce Cheo, who interned at Motorola in Shanghai because she was motivated by a desire to learn about China and its work culture.

Far from being put off by the vagaries of living and working on foreign shores, the students struck out to explore new territory and, in the process, honed life skills such as independence, adaptability and resilience.

When asked to compare internship lessons learnt overseas as opposed to locally, the students came back with the consensus: You win some

and you lose some. Joyce Cheo and fellow undergrad Joyce Leong felt that their friends in Singapore appeared to have gained more in-depth work experience.

However, Regina begged to differ. In her personal experience, she said she "definitely learnt more" than some of her friends, as in China she was exposed to a larger market, which broadened her perspective.

Recent WKWSCI graduate Wong Kai Xuan, who interned at the Radio Broadcast International in Beijing, added that her stint allowed her to interact with people from a different culture and hailing from all walks of life—a factor she feels enriched her internship experience.

None of the students interviewed by ConnexSCIons disputed the fact that they picked up valuable life skills, particularly in the areas of interpersonal communication and tenacity. And these can only be assets, giving them an edge as they launch into their fulltime careers.

Initial obstacles the students had to overcome, however, included the language barrier. English being their first language caused them to have some difficulties understanding foreign technical jargon. Regina recalled awkward situations when she could not properly convey her ideas across in Mandarin. Understanding the mentality and expectations of their foreign employers also posed a challenge as both parties come from dissimilar educational and cultural backgrounds.

The students' last word is: Go with an open heart; you never know what you will encounter, and that can only be valuable in your journey of learning. **C**



First Times

A fresh take on familiar events keeps students rocking

By Christine Tan



D&D Rocks (literally)

The WKWSCI annual Dinner and Dance rose to new heights of glamour this year when the committee decided to hold it on a yacht.

“We thought it would really be good to have a D&D like none other before—to make it the best D&D ever in CS history!” enthused Xin Yi, financial controller of the committee. The dream did not come easy. The committee almost despaired as they hunted high and low for a good deal. But their efforts paid off as everyone had a fantastic time rocking to music and dance while the catamaran MV Falcon Princess sailed serenely around the southern islands.

Themed “Old Hollywood Glamour”, the D&D also had pageant contestants dress in the 1950s Hollywood style. Adam Osman, a pageant contestant, revealed that it was his first time on a yacht—and getting seasick—yet the yacht was a great idea, as it “had a homely and cosy feel to it, at the same time being very glitzy and glamorous”. He attributed his “absolutely fantastic” experience to the committee’s perfectionism.



Night Vision

Wee Ride 2009 was an inaugural night cycling event organised by the 16th CI Club. Club member Sean wanted to organise something that would bond members while promoting a healthy lifestyle.

“Night cycling is a common activity among NTU halls, so I decided to adopt the idea so that everyone can enjoy it,” said Sean.

The group of 80 rode from WKWSCI to East Coast Park (ECP) but ran into a police roadblock midway. “Their main aim was to check for drunk drivers, so it was fine,” said Sean. They managed to reach ECP at 6am.

Lee Rui Qi, a Year 3 student along for the Ride, added, “It is a healthy and much welcomed change—even though everyone’s butt hurt for days after that!”

Freshmen on the Loose

Imagine the horror of this year's Freshmen Orientation Camp when they were told that the hostel accommodation was not open for application due to renovation works. The committee also had to face the H1N1 outbreak and the financial recession. "Companies weren't that keen on cash sponsorships," said committee chairman Wei Liang. Yet the committee managed to raise more than anticipated and had zero H1N1 cases arising from the camp, which was eventually held at the Goldkist Beach Resort. "Perhaps the relocation was a blessing in disguise because it got everyone to squeeze together in the same chalet rooms so they got to know each other better!" joked Terrence, the logistics manager.



Happy Fête

A photography competition here, a film screening there—but for some reason, no-one had thought of stringing all these small events together into a large festival... until Jason Khor and Edwin Ho came along. Both social secretaries of the 16th CI Club, they leveraged on a senior's idea to launch the inaugural Communication Studies Festival, Fête.

Held from 10-18 March this year, the event comprised a bazaar, a photography competition, short film screenings, a talenttime, the "Academy Awards", and an after-show party. "The idea was to involve as many students as possible and to cater to people of different interests in CS," said Jason.

The festival received an overwhelming response and participation for the bazaar and competitions. "We even had people from other faculties and schools coming down for the short film screening," added Edwin.

Fête ended on a high note with the "Academy Awards". Everyone had a good laugh, especially for the category of "Closet Mugger", won by Year 3 student Stanley Tang. Besides declaring bewilderment at the results, Stanley added that he only came in peace. Yeah right, Stanley. **C**

The STAFF of DREAMS

By Tan Yan Ru

With their extensive experience and expertise, you could call WKWSCI's new staff members a Dream Team.



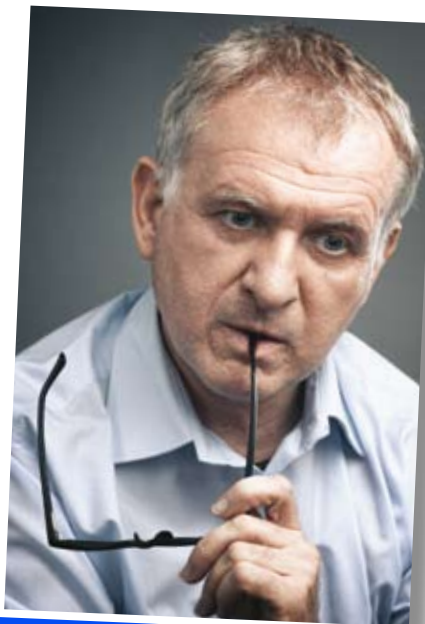
DR SUWICHIT (SEAN) CHAIDAROON
Assistant Professor

Originally from Thailand, Asst/P Chaidaroon's research includes PR & crisis communication in Thailand and Southeast Asia, organisational misconducts, and corporate social responsibility. He sees Singapore as the ideal place to conduct his research, which he hopes would ultimately benefit his home country.

WKWSCI was the obvious choice when he decided to move to Singapore from The University of Sydney. "I knew the work of several professors in the Public and Promotional Division that I really respect. So I felt that it would be great to have a chance to work with them," he says.

Asst/P Chaidaroon joined the school officially in July this year. He feels that research and teaching can be done together to better benefit students, explaining, "I want my research to inspire my students in the corporate communication aspect that would benefit their future career or postgraduate education."

Settling in has been a snap for the academic who is enjoying the camaraderie of colleagues, the curiosity of his students... and the local food.



MR KYM CAMPBELL
Lecturer

Mr Campbell has many years of extensive experience in the television industry, both as a practitioner and a teacher. In addition to his consultancy work, he specialises in teaching film directing, media performance, broadcast journalism, as well as film and television production.

Having heard a lot of good things about the School, Mr Campbell considered WKWSCI to be a good place for him to help students fulfil their broadcast dreams. He officially joined the WKWSCI family in

August this year.

His goal is to get his students to be more involved in the industry by entering their projects in more film and television festivals. "It's

nice to a degree to be safe behind the walls of the university but I suppose the final thing is it's good to also make links and relationships with people outside as well," he says.

Mr Campbell feels that Singapore's film industry is in a very interesting position at the moment. "It's a little bit *rojak*, really. It doesn't really know what it is. The best situation would be if Singapore can stamp its own identity on what it can produce."

MR SUBBARAJ SHAKTHIKUMAR
Project Officer

Mr Shakthi joined the school as a project officer this July, assisting A/P Christopher Khoo and Asst/P Na Jin Cheon on their research projects, including the analysis of web content. Mr Shakthi thinks that the working environment in WKWSCI is ideal for carrying out research work as he receives a lot of input from the professors. Having completed his master's degree in WKWSCI, Mr Shakthi is hoping to pursue his doctoral degree here in the near future.



MS LAU JOON-NIE
Lecturer

To Ms Lau, who joined the school in July, being in NTU is like coming back home, as she had lived on the campus back in the 1980s when her father was a staff of the Centre of Educational Development.

Ms Lau spent over 15 years working in the broadcast television industry.

A highlight of her career occurred in 2007, when she went on a reporting trip to Naypyidaw, the new capital of Myanmar, founded in 2005. It was a time

when few foreigners were welcomed. "It was very exciting to be in such a reclusive country, and having the chance to meet representatives from the

different ministries," she recalls.

Travelling extensively for reporting assignments has allowed her to gain eye-opening experiences while offering her viewers new insights. She hopes to share her experience with students who are aspiring journalists, encouraging them to "be determined, be insistent, don't take no for an answer, look beyond the obvious; it's a lot of work but don't accept everything at face value". **C**

MS GRACE GAN

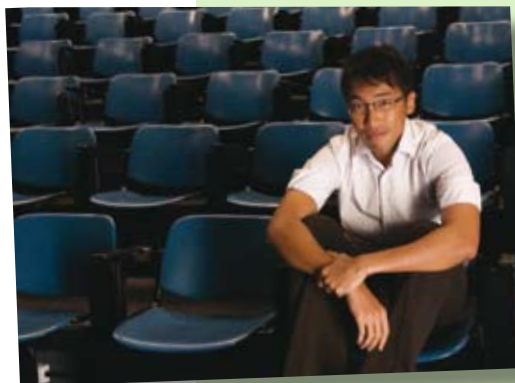
Executive Officer

As the programme administrator for MMC & Graduate Research Programmes since July, Ms Gan mainly handles enquiries on the programme and liaises with course instructors and students. She believes that her working experience in marketing and administration will help her in promoting and creating awareness for the Postgraduate programmes.

MR PYAE SONE MAUNG

Technical Executive

Mr Pyae Sone graduated from the Singapore Polytechnic with a Diploma in Information Technology and also holds a Specialist Diploma in Digital Media Creation. He joined the WKWSCI family officially in September this year. As a Technical Executive, he provides IT support to all staff and students as well as assisting in the practicum production and EdveNTUre.



Mr Daniel Heng

FROM STUDENTS TO TEACHERS

By Woo Sian Boon

Our grads are returning to pay it forward

As a Communication Studies undergraduate in WKWSCI, Ms Rachel Neo never dreamt that one day, she would be teaching WKWSCI students about the media and its effects on audiences. Yet, this is what she is doing today in addition to completing her thesis as a graduate student in WKWSCI.

"Teaching in addition to juggling my coursework and thesis has certainly helped me to be a more confident person and it has also helped me to practise better time management," says Ms Neo.

The scenario is different for another alumnus, Mr Daniel Heng, who has always wanted to nurture and inspire young minds. In addition to his job as an MTV producer, he returns to WKWSCI once a week to teach Visual Communications (COM 206).

"I get a sense of fulfilment from imparting knowledge to students and pride in being able to share the thoughts of my peers," says Mr Heng.

Now that the teaching bug has bitten them, both Ms Neo and Mr Heng are considering teaching fulltime. They have Assistant Professor Shirley Ho as a role model.

After graduating from the School in 2002, Asst/P Ho joined the teaching staff as a senior tutor in 2003, before leaving for the U.S. to pursue her masters and PhD through a scholarship provided by the School.

Returning in 2008 with a doctorate in Communication Studies, she became a fulltime staff to fulfill her bond. Having taught psychology communications last semester, Asst/P Ho has moved on to teaching Audience Research Methods.

Being an alumnus has helped Asst/P Ho to understand her students better. "I try to use a more hands-on method when it comes to teaching," she explains. "For example, I prefer to sit down with my students to show them how to use the program SPSS for compiling statistics."

Graduate student Mr Benjamin Li agrees that professors in WKWSCI have a personal approach. This is one of the reasons he chose to return after graduating last year.

Under the tutelage of A/P May Lwin and Asst/P Jung Younbo, he is researching and writing a thesis on how digital gaming can promote health.

Having been from the School, "I don't have to adapt to a new environment and can start working straightaway," he says.

All we can say to our returning alumni is: Welcome home! **C**

A Different Perspective

By Tan Yan Ru

Visiting professors add new dimension to students' learning



Shaw Professor Vincent Mosco



WKW Professor Georgette Wang



Assistant Professor Daniel Reimold

“The level of passion from the students I’ve met here is absolutely incomparable to anything I’ve come across before.”

– Assistant Professor
Daniel Reimold

At the start of this semester, WKWSCI welcomed three new visiting professors to the school—Shaw Professor Vincent Mosco, Wee Kim Wee Professor Georgette Wang and Visiting Assistant Professor Daniel Reimold. *ConnexSCions* finds out what special skills they brought to our School... and what special memories they took home.

What research are you currently working on?

VM: I am currently working on a project that addresses knowledge and communication workers in a global information society. We are looking at how workers around the world respond to the challenges of technological change, transnational business and the neo-liberal state.

GW: As I get closer to retirement, I feel that there is something that I really want to work out and that is what I call “bringing communication research home”. What I intend to do is to ground our theories, concerns or research questions in our own social culture. On the other hand, we need to think of making connections and linking up with the rest of the

world. Singapore has always been an ideal place to get the work done as you have a greater diversity here.

DR: I am currently continuing my research on the history and current state of the Singapore student press. I am very passionate about student journalism. The driving motivation for my being here is that I see Singapore as a place where there have been a lot of emerging passion from students to do journalism, specifically at the college or university level. Given its reputation for journalism and education, NTU is the perfect place to base my research.

What do you think of the WKWSCI education?

VM: I have always liked the School. It has a good programme,

brings together different specialties, has a strong faculty and good students. I have had a good experience.

GW: The convergence of mass media, information and telecommunications systems is challenging the traditional media-based professional education model in our discipline. Communication schools everywhere are searching for a way to effectively respond to this change. A more integrated and flexible curriculum is believed to be essential under the circumstances, but changing the departmental structure and revamping the system often make the task more difficult than it seems.

In this aspect the WKWSCl programme has vision. Fully recognising the shared basic requirement of media and communication professionals cutting across different lines of works in this area, it is one of the very few programmes blessed with little sub-disciplinary boundaries and restrictions since the very beginning.

With information science as part of the programme, it is put in a much more advantageous position in developing a teaching curriculum and research agenda that are closely in line with, if not leading, the cutting edge development of the industry.

DR: I think it's fantastic. There are a number of visionaries in the school. The level of passion from the students I've met here is absolutely incomparable to anything I've come across before. That has made the teaching experience very rewarding.

What advice would you give to students who have a keen interest in communication research?

VM: My advice as a social scientist who has done research in both political economy and cultural

studies as well as policy research is that it is very important to do a careful reading of history and a lot of the new media that people are fascinated with today.

It makes good sense to read historical accounts of media and to develop a critical capability, which is to learn that one has to raise questions about the work you read and not just accept it as necessarily true. So you have to ask questions about the value of the theory, the quality of data. Think about the wider social aspects of things, that all media have social, cultural, political and economic dimensions to them.

I think it is important for people to think about how they can make a strong contribution to the world. I encourage people to think big and to think about what matters for society, in order to do research that is going to make things better for society and the world.

Was there a culture shock when you first arrived in Singapore?

VM: No, I've spent time in other parts of Asia, so I have some idea of what to expect from the region.

It has actually been very pleasant to be here. People have been kind and generous. So generally, the formal rules of the society don't matter as much as just how interested people are in having you come and how well they extend themselves to you.

GW: Not at all. Previously, my impression was that Singapore has Sentosa, Orchard Road and that's about it. This visit, I find Singapore much more interesting and there is a great deal of things to explore. I find the food very interesting because personally I am very picky with food and I love to try different kinds of food. I think this aspect of Singapore is wonderful.

DR: Yes. The first day I arrived, I ended up at a wet market, smelling

durian and wondering what I got myself into.

The Singlish is slowly coming to me too. I will now drop a *lah* or *aiyo* when teaching without even realising it. It's still tough to tell if the students are laughing with me or at me.

What will you miss about Singapore when it's time to leave?

VM: I've spent a lot of time in the Botanic Gardens and the Orchid Garden is absolutely spectacular. I've never seen anything like it and I'm going to miss not having that nearby.

And, my goodness, the sheer variety of food is spectacular. I will also miss a number of people whom I've gotten to know here, but I think I have made some friendships that will extend into the future.

GW: I find quite a lot of interaction; people like to talk and exchange views. A lot of times it doesn't happen. That shows an interest in what others are doing and it's a sense of wanting to share, communicate and exchange ideas. I think it's a wonderful thing that I will miss.

DR: The number one thing I will miss is how easy it is to get around the country. I will miss the wireless internet access, the accessibility that is just everywhere here.

Everyone is a lot friendlier here too. The joke I like to tell is that when I first got here I wanted to have my picture taken by the Merlion and I was asking people if they could very quickly snap a photo of me. This young woman volunteered and stayed with me for 10 minutes to make sure that I got the perfect shot. She handed me back the camera and said, "Thank you so much for letting me do that." I walked away thinking: She's thanking me, apparently for the honour of taking my picture! C

The GRAD Beyond

By Danielle Ong, Amanda Mok & Cathryn Neo

WKWSCI alumni from each division speak up from the other side of School walls



KENNETH CHIA

Class of 2009

Majored in Advertising

Now: Junior copywriter, J.Walter Thomson Singapore

What aspect of advertising attracted you above all other tracks offered at WKWSCI?

I have a penchant for creating things: short stories, poems, scripts, food recipes, and so on. Which is why I was really drawn to filmmaking and advertising. I knew it had to be advertising after seeing mind-blowing ads by gurus like Neil French, David Abbott and Tony Brignull.

What is the one thing that you would most like to tell/advise advertising students?

Follow your passion, and the money will follow. If it doesn't, well, it'll be too late for you to regret anyway.

Would you ever consider switching fields?

I still harbour hopes of becoming a film director, probably much later in life. But I think advertising will always be a part of me. I'll freelance. I'll consult. I'll sell cars in my dreams. People say that advertising is an industry for the young. Then again, isn't

advertising about breaking the rules?

Do you think that advertising is more effective in achieving clients' results than other forms of marketing?

I'm of the opinion that effective advertising usually involves a 360 degree approach, which encompasses PR, direct marketing, sales promotion and so forth, depending on the client's needs. Integration happens because these marketing tools have but one objective: Sell that damn product!

Tell us about your most interesting project.

Maybe I can tell you about my most boring project, that'll be easier. *Laughs* I'm kidding. As a junior copywriter, I don't get to handle pitches or campaigns, so I'm mostly working on print ads for clients like SilkAir, Nokia and Pizza Hut. These may not be as interesting as pitches, but they're certainly rewarding. And they'll pave the way to that nationwide

product launch under my charge, two years later.

How has the school prepared you for working life in the advertising field?

Modules that involve brand management, copywriting, and campaign planning etc. These are definitely useful, and so are the occasional free tickets to advertising award shows and seminars with creative directors. And of course, the internship programme. Do well for that, and you've probably secured yourself a job.

Is there an area where the school has not prepared you sufficiently? WKWSCI didn't prepare me for eight pints every Friday night!

Is it true that the advertising field is very stressful and competitive, with long working hours?

Advertising is like the cigarette box that reads: "Yellow teeth! Impotency! Lung cancer!"

The dangers are all real, but a smoker will still go ahead, won't he?

SAM KANG LI

Class of 2009

Majored in Journalism

Now: Freelance
photographer



How did you get into freelance photography?

Photography was something I picked up in my second year of university. There was no *Eureka!* moment. But to start off, I guess you must have an eye for pictures and sensitivity to visuals.

When I graduated, the market for photojournalism was not very good due to the recession, so I decided to strike out on my own.

Being a freelance photographer gives one more space for creativity and individualism, and less of having to worry about living up to people's expectations.

Tell us more about your internship at the *Nepali Times* in 2008.

I decided to go for the *Nepali Times* internship under the recommendation of Asst/P Shyam Tekwani. It was a very exciting time there because there were a lot of things happening, with the monarchy being overthrown and the Maoists' rise to parliamentary power. I think I was very fortunate to have been there when things were happening, because it gave me better opportunities to take pictures that stand out.

Which tells a better story—words or pictures?

People nowadays have shorter and shorter attention spans. An interesting picture makes people want to find out more, it piques people's interest because they want to gain a better understanding of what the picture is all about. But pictures can only tell so much, and I believe that we need other mediums in order to convey the full message.

Are there are more opportunities for female photographers now, as compared to 10 years ago?

Definitely. Female photographers are increasingly taken more seriously, and there are even grants specifically awarded to female photographers, whereas there is none specifically for male photographers.

Females also tend to thrive in certain environments, for example, when taking pictures of women, the subjects tend to be more comfortable, and female photographers tend to be a little bit more sensitive. But that's just a general observation. I believe that males and females are given equal opportunities nowadays.

Can you share with us your most memorable assignment?

It was in Nepal when I was with a reporter to cover a story on a mobile medical team. We went from one remote village to the next where the medical team treated women with a condition called uterine prolapse, where the womb has collapsed. It was memorable not because of the photography aspect, but because of the experience of being in a place that is totally different, facing situations I'd never even imagined before.

If you could photograph anyone or anything, what would that be?

My family and my illness. In my family we live very separate lives. Through photography, I hope that I can bring us closer together. Memories can be frozen with photography, like when I'm not with my family, I can take out their photos and they're always there.

As for my illness, I've had Crohn's Disease for the past 12 years. I want to take pictures that convey my feelings, to be able to come to terms with it.

What would be your advice to students who are eyeing overseas internships?

My advice would be to not get so much advice. *Laughs* Go with an open mind, don't pre-empt what's going to happen and therefore limiting your experience. Don't go after the same things that previous WKWSCI interns have achieved, but pursue what truly interests you.

What is your best memory of WKWSCI?

The friendships forged, the friendly competitions, and the sharing of our lives.

LIM SIOW JOO

Class of 1999

Majored in Public Promotional Communications

Now: Associate Director, Corporate Affairs, Temasek Holdings



Did you get a culture shock when you first started work?

Not really. I had been doing part-time work in related fields during my holidays. For example, I had a short stint at Saatchi and Saatchi and an internship at the Ministry of Information and the Arts (now known as Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts).

What is the most rewarding thing about your PR role?

To be able to grow with a company and be part of its organic growth. It does not mean just growing in terms of its business but in terms of how it progresses in its communications with its stakeholders. This was especially so during the dotcom era, when there were so many start-ups. We received many proposals and calls for tenders every week! We had to help unknown companies build everything from scratch. This meant designing their websites, devising communications strategy, and designing their name cards. It was essentially starting up with them!

What is the biggest challenge you have faced in your work?

The challenge in PR is being able to enter every new project or company with an “empty glass” mindset. Whether you are from an agency or whether you’re working in-house, no matter how much research you’ve done, you cannot go into a meeting with pre-conceived notions. You need to listen to what your client has to say and understand exactly the objectives before you jump to conclusions.

What do you see yourself doing in the next five years?

To lead a regional team of strategic and credible professionals. Together we’ll contribute positively and help to raise the bar in the PR profession!

Would you recommend a fresh graduate to start off in a PR agency or an in-house department?

It depends on your personality. If you are someone who likes variety, and loves to experiment with many things, you could start off at an agency where you will get a spread and exposure of different clients. Working in an in-house firm would give you greater depth in the organisation. Jumping from an agency to an in-house firm would require you to make some adjustments as you would need to

deal with a much wider spread of stakeholders, ranging from front liners up to top management.

How do PR and advertising complement each other?

They serve different functions. Advertising creates the awareness, for example, if you are breaking into a new industry or a new market. Once awareness is set, people will then venture into PR. So normally advertising comes first then PR. If advertising helps the public to remember the name of the company or product, PR helps to create a sense of what exactly the name represents, its character and builds its reputation.

Does the PR industry in Singapore operate differently from other countries?

Different messages and the way they are communicated appeal to different cultures. Take for example, in countries such as China and Vietnam where the governments are dominant in the public’s mind, communications often have to include a public affairs role. In India where market talk is rampant, news leaks all the time and the stories are often out before the official announcements are made. Hence you need to keep information extremely tight there.

Is it true that the PR industry is full of girls in miniskirts?

No, that’s not true. However, I remember going to pitch for an account where there was one group of consultants from another agency who came all dressed up in the uniform of the company! But they didn’t get the job in the end.

I believe, rather than being fanciful, PR is a professional practice of managing communications between the company and its stakeholders. It is therefore the counsel that counts. In other words, how well you know the client and the industry and how you want to position it.

SOPHIE KOH

Class of 2008

Majored in Communication Research

Now: Market researcher, TNS Global



What is a typical work day of a market researcher like?

Of all the jobs I've had, working in CR is the closest to what school is like. Even though a typical work day is 12 hours, I'm constantly challenged. And every day is a surprise because no two sets of problems are the same. Most of the day is spent writing reports, such as how the client is faring, but sometimes I get to go out and do fieldwork as well.

What is the biggest mistake a market research practitioner can make?

In research, information is very sensitive. It is not very wise to work for competing organisations. So I would say that when working in CR, be very careful when handling clients, and especially careful when handling their information.

What is it like to conduct a focus group?

Conducting a focus group is one of the most interesting things I've done in CR. The difficult part is being able to reign in your emotions and facial expressions in order to remain neutral.

There was this incident when I was conducting a focus group on online dating. There was a participant whom I thought just had to be gay, and then when he revealed that he had a girlfriend, it took all of me to keep a straight face and not reveal my absolute surprise.

What is the difference between market research and academic research?

Market research and academic research are inter-related. Academic research is often

syndicated, promotes a common interest and involves large groups of individuals. What type of research is done depends on who is funding them, and the research results are patented. Market researchers often buy these patented research results from academic researchers.

What made you choose to work in TNS Global?

When I do research, I want to know that the data is being used for something. At TNS Global, what I do is consultancy work, where I find business solutions for companies. TNS Global is known for their workshops, which are conducted after research for clients. Every company has its own set of problems, and I am able to use creativity and variety to help them. I'm also very thankful that at TNS Global, I get to work with the "big shots" even though I joined the company not long ago. It has given me the opportunity to learn a lot, and I'm grateful for that.

What advice do you have for students who are going for their Professional Internship?

I would definitely say to go out and try different things, do things that you never thought you'd be interested in. For me, even though I was majoring in CR, I went to Shanghai to intern in a company in the business sector, which has no direct relation to CR. As you interact with different people, you learn to handle different kinds of situations, and your EQ (Emotional Quotient) gets higher. I believe that no experience in life is wasted.

Who were your favourite CR lecturers in WKWSCI?

Professor Marko Skoric and Professor Detenber. Initially, my friends and I went to class only because we thought Marko was cute! *Laughs* But during my FYP when he was overseeing my group, I found that he is someone really encouraging and patient with his students.

As for Professor Detenber, I found him really scary at first, but in the end, I learnt a lot from him.

What is your fondest memory of WKWSCI?

Definitely running to class so as not to be late, especially for Professor Detenber's lectures because he is well known to give out quizzes in the first five minutes of lectures. And of course, the benches where there were gossip and friendship. The benches at WKWSCI are something of an icon.



NG BAOYING

Class of 2007 Majored in Journalism

Now: News reporter, Channel News Asia

What is your role at CNA?

My primary role is to produce stories for two night bulletins—Singapore Business Tonight and Asia Business Tonight. Depending on the newsworthiness of the stories, sometimes I'll do versions for News 5 Tonight or Singapore Tonight. There are also other regional bulletins like South-east Asia Tonight that sometimes request for the stories. The stories can come out in forms including just a reader voice over (I write it, news reader reads it), full package (I voice the story and do a PTC), or spiel (I sit in the newsroom and the news anchor throws to me). In my secondary role I produce stories for a current affairs programme called Money Mind when needed.

What qualities does a TV news reporter need in contrast to, say, a photojournalist?

Knowing how to make an interviewee comfortable in front of the camera, and asking the right questions for the right sound bites. And that involves planning ahead for exactly what kind of sound bites you need. You can't go back to the office, figure you need something,

then call the guy to meet you again. There's no time. But you also can't over-ask questions because the story is at most two minutes long and I'm not going to use more than two sound bites from the same guy, then he'll get really irritated if he talked so much in front of the camera and he's on air for only 40 seconds. I do a maximum of five questions. The pre-interview chat helps narrow down the questions.

The other thing is, as a television reporter you have to know roughly what your story is going to look like on location because of the piece to camera (PTC), which has to be done there. You can't use the key points in the story for your PTC, because that goes into the introduction and the lead of the story—and you don't normally start packages with your face yapping away. Hence, the PTC has to be a not-so-important point, but something important enough to go into the story.

What trends have there been in the broadcast industry recently?

News broadcast in CNA has changed a lot. In the past year, there has been a thrust to integrate MediaCorp's

print, television and radio news departments. So apart from producing stories for TV, sometimes I version them for print or radio (or someone else does it). Studying in WKWSCI helped because I have experiences with other media.

What advice would you give to WKWSCI students who aspire to be news reporters?

Intern like crazy.

It's only hands-on experiences that will let you understand exactly what kind of animal television news is, and the learning curve is very steep at the beginning. There always has to be a cameraman for the interviews, you always have to go on location (I go to about two locations a day for interviews). This requires a fair bit of logistical planning—I can't pick up the phone and call a newsmaker for a quote as and when I need it. I have to pin him down to a date and time, and try and put both interviews as close to each other as possible to minimise travelling time. There is quite a lot of cold calling and persuading to do. These are all small but important details that can seriously derail your day, and it's something that you can only pick up on the job. It is hard to learn these from a book, or even by talking to someone experienced.

How has WKWSCI given you an edge over your peers?

The contacts base from which I managed to get an internship. Also, the familiarity with camerawork, newsgathering and so forth. There's also a natural support group of friends in the industry with whom you can compare notes, receive help and share your knowledge... and maybe also to share gossip!

I think the lecturers at WKWSCI have done an awesome job sharing their expertise with us. Most things at work come to you quite naturally, as opposed to someone who doesn't have a WKWSCI background. **C**

Cheers to WKWSCI!

By Cathryn Neo

Our monthly Brewerkz night has become part of the institution. On the last Thursday of every month, Year 4 students, fresh grads and alumni hang out, clink glasses and catch up on what's new and news. This month, we asked alumni: So what's the difference between being a WKWSCI student and being alumni?



"Though the irregular hours and working during weekends continues into working life, the biggest difference would be that in WKWSCI, there is a tangible point to set forth your target. Work is almost like a never-ending cycle."

– Clement Ng (centre), Senior Office at A*STAR



"You cannot slack anymore! In school, it was always about chasing GPAs, but now at work and owning a business, I must find ways to make my business grow."

– Yan Zhao, co-founder of The Little Red Ants Creative Studio



"Money does not drop from the sky anymore!"

– Lu Jing Shi, Yoga Teacher

Please detach the Alumni Connector and send to:

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