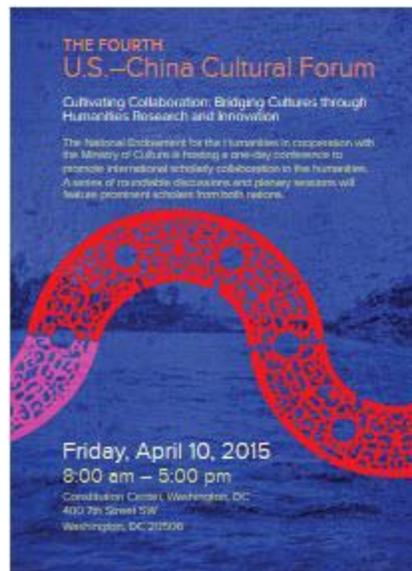


## Fourth U.S. - China Cultural Forum: Cultivating Collaborations: Bridging Cultures through Humanities Research and Innovation



On Friday, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the US National Endowment for Humanities and the Ministry of Culture of China co-hosted the 4<sup>th</sup> US-China Cultural Forum: Cultivating collaborations: Bridging Cultures through Humanities Research and Innovation. The biannual forum alternates between the United States and China. This forum, fourth in a series, took place at the Constitution Center in Washington DC. The forum highlights successful models of collaboration and encourages new efforts to pursue shared interests in humanities research.

William Adams, Chairman of NEH, and Ding Wei (丁伟), Vice Minister of the Ministry of Culture of China, made the welcome speeches. Both emphasized the importance of bilateral dialogues and encouraged more international collaboration in humanities research. "Common topics will transcend differences. Intellectual exchange will bridge culture gaps and enhance common ground. More collaboration will be a win-win situation for both countries," said Ding.

The forum featured the following noted scholars as keynote speakers:

Peter Bol is a Carswell Professor of East Asian Languages and Civilizations at Harvard University and the Vice Provost for Advances in Learning. He co-created ChinaX, a MOOC course that covers 4,000 years of Chinese history through history, geography, philosophies, literature, politics, economy, art, and ecology. He proudly announced that it is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most popular course at Harvard, reaching thousands of students worldwide. He acknowledged that most Americans do not value or understand China adequately. However, "China will be more important in Americans' consciousness" as it is becoming an economic power in the world. "China has a history of diversity, openness and change. The more we can teach Chinese in America, the better," said Bol.

Liu Dong (刘东) is the Vice Dean of the Academy of Ancient Chinese Studies and Professor of Philosophy at Tsinghua University. He emphasized the value and challenges of scholarly translation in cultural exchange. He commented that translation is important because it facilitates cultural exchange, which in turn leads to mutual understanding and tolerance. He noted that all the major modern works in Western academia about humanity and social science have been published in Chinese, but not vice versa. He called for more efforts from scholars of both sides to balance the situation.

The topics for breakout sessions included Scholarly Translation, Big Data and Digital Humanities, and Online Education. Scholars presented their most recent research and practices in these areas. Audiences engaged in an active discussion and exchange of ideas with the panelists. Below are some brief notes on the discussions:

1. Scholarly Translation – Translation work is important yet challenging for cultural exchanges. Translators are unsung heroes. They need to have both the knowledge and language skills. They have to negotiate between different cultures and overcome cultural hegemony. Translation is a moving target with variance for different genres, levels and audiences. There is no absolute equivalency. The concept of mutual re-adjustment and some ambiguity is sometimes needed. Translation has to be carried out with contextual understanding.
2. Big Data and Digital Humanities – We are entering the era of big data. Big Data is here to stay and to grow. It is changing the research landscape for all disciplines including humanities. It will make humanities research more scientific. Librarians are entrusted with the responsibility of serving as the curator of big data – to store, analyze and provide access to the big data, as demonstrated in the initiatives taken by National Library of China (Sun, Yigang 孙一钢, Assistant Director of the National Library of China.)
3. Online Education – Using digital means to facilitate humanities research, collaboration and education has great potential. MOOCs are gaining momentum but we are still facing the challenges of making them more user-centered, cost-effective and accessible to remote areas. There are still more questions than answers. As the world becomes increasingly digital, new techniques have made global collaboration easier and feasible.

The successful collaboration models showcased at this forum include the partnership between the Palaces Museum of China and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and a partnership between Monticello and the National Library of China for an exhibition on Thomas Jefferson.

Two students, one from China and one from the U.S., also shared the value of their intercultural experience and understanding.