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The ASIS Outstanding Information Science Teacher Award for 1983: Ching-chih Chen Wins the Fourth Award

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Last October, at its forty-sixth annual meeting, the American Society for Information Science (ASIS) presented the 1983 Outstanding Information Science Teacher Award to Ching-chih Chen. She is professor and associate dean of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at Simmons College, Boston, Massachusetts. ISI® sponsors the award, donates the \$500 honorarium, and also covers the administrative costs. However, neither I nor anyone else at ISI was consulted on Chen's selection.

Information science is still a young field, and its intellectual boundaries are not sharply defined.¹ The next generation of information professionals will play a crucial role in shaping the field. Thus, today's teachers will have great influence in developing future information scientists and technologists.

In 1979, ISI proposed to ASIS the establishment of an award which would honor excellence in teaching rather than research. The following year, F. Wilfrid Lancaster, University of Illinois, was named the first winner of the new award.² Pauline Atherton Cochrane, Syracuse University, New York, received the award in 1981.³ The 1982 winner was Belver C. Griffith, Drexel University, Philadelphia.⁴ This past year, the ASIS Education Committee named Chen.

The award certificate presented to Chen honors her "for her dedication and deep commitment to education and training in library and information sci-

ence through her teaching, publications, research and professional involvement, for her enthusiastic ability to inspire, challenge and generate excitement among her students, and for her leadership in the international information arena."

A native of China, Chen received a bachelor's degree from the National Taiwan University, which presented her with the Distinguished Alumnus Award in June 1983. In 1961, she obtained an MA in library science from the University of Michigan. She received a Distinguished Alumnus Award from that institution in March 1981. After earning her MA, Chen held positions in the University of Michigan library. She also worked at the public library in Windsor, the McMaster University library in Hamilton, and the University of Waterloo library—all three in Ontario, Canada. This was followed by a position at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Science Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts. In 1971, Chen joined the Simmons faculty as an assistant professor. While at Simmons, she continued work on a PhD in library and information science. In 1974, she received her PhD from Case Western Reserve University. In 1979, she was named professor and associate dean at Simmons.

In teaching her courses, Chen uses a balance of theory and practice. However, whenever appropriate, she stresses theory over practice. She believes that this produces more versatile information professionals, who are able to adapt



Ching-chih Chen

their knowledge to different circumstances.⁵ Among those who nominated Chen for the ASIS award were a number of her former students, who testified to her energetic, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable delivery of lessons and her deep devotion to her students.

Frances Berger, assistant to the dean at Simmons's Graduate School of Library and Information Science, told the ASIS Education Committee, at registration time, "[Chen's] courses are filled within a few days...with long waiting lists for each course."⁶ Willie Hardin, Chen's former doctoral student and now associate librarian at the University of Central Arkansas, Conway, asserts: "No matter how busy Chen was doing research or writing, she was always able to apply her extraordinary talent and time with her doctoral students."⁷

Chen's teaching experience has not been limited to the US. She has conducted seminars and special training courses in information management and technology in various parts of the world such as China, India, Israel, Mexico, and Taiwan. In 1979, Chen was invited to deliver a series of lectures in the People's Republic of China. Her experience prompted her to write on the state of information science there.^{8,9} Since then, she has traveled frequently to China in different capacities. These included trips as a consultant to the World Health Organization (WHO).

Chen's dedication to teaching has not prevented her from doing active re-

search. She is also a prolific author. In a recent study by Robert M. Hayes, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of California, Los Angeles, of the most-cited ten percent of 411 tenured library and information science faculty, Chen ranked fourth. Using *Social Sciences Citation Index*[®] (SSCI[®]), Hayes derived the ranking from a "normalized" frequency of citations to substantive articles.¹⁰ This study is an important addition to the literature on faculty evaluation, recently reviewed in *Current Contents*[®] (CC[®]).^{11,12}

Among Chen's earliest papers is a 1972 study of the use patterns of physics journals at the MIT Science Library.¹³ In this study, Chen observed which physics journals were left lying on study tables and trucks in the library over a period of time. From her observations, she concluded that a core of 49 journals supplied 90 percent of the user needs. With 47 citations in SSCI and *Science Citation Index*[®] (SCI[®]), this paper ranks among the three or four most-cited articles published in the *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*. Chen's results, by the way, demonstrate once again the pervasiveness of the Bradford distribution.¹⁴

Another early Chen project focused on book reviews published in scientific journals. Librarians depend on these book reviews to help them make acquisitions decisions. Chen evaluated the quality and timeliness of book reviews published in issues of biomedical, scientific, and technical journals in the early 1970s. Results of this study formed the basis of her book *Biomedical, Scientific & Technical Book Reviewing*.¹⁵ In fact, this work was well known to us when we started the *Index to Book Reviews in the Sciences*.¹⁶ However, there is a great gap in the perceived needs of librarians and the ability of existing book review mechanisms to satisfy these needs. We subsequently had to abandon this service.¹⁷

The time lag between publication of a book and appearance of a review was the biggest problem Chen found. She

noted that the value of a book review is inversely proportional to the length of that time lag. According to Chen, chemistry periodicals appeared to be the most prompt, with nearly 75 percent of the reviews appearing within a year.¹⁵ (p. 76) But Chen asserts that for book reviews to be truly useful to librarians, the time lag should be just three or four months. Although Chen has not updated her findings, she recently stated that the situation in scientific book reviewing is probably no better today.⁵

Chen also performed two major, multiyear research projects with sourcebooks on subject literature that led to the publication of reference books by MIT Press—*Scientific and Technical Information Sources*¹⁸ and *Health Sciences Information Sources*.¹⁹ Listings in both volumes, which consist of annotated bibliographic information and sources for reviews of the books, are grouped by type of sourcebook—abstract, dictionary, encyclopedia, etc.—and then by subject.

A more recent investigation by Chen was designed to help determine what role libraries should play in today's changing information environment. Together with Peter Hennon, a former faculty member at Simmons, Chen surveyed the information needs of the general public in the Boston area. The results of this study, which was funded by the US Department of Education, were published in the book *Information Seeking*.²⁰ Commenting on this work, Chen noted that libraries are just one part of a society's total information system. In a pluralistic society, private as well as governmental agencies are providers of information. According to Chen, in truly effective information systems, all relevant information providers work in concert to satisfy the needs of consumers. We can expect that, one day, combinations of these providers will be integrated into formal networks.⁵

Currently, Chen is researching the use of video disks for information storage and processing. The National Endowment for the Humanities has awarded

Chen a planning grant for Project Emperor I. The project will use video disk technology to present and interpret information about the archaeological dig at the tomb of Ching Shih Huang Ti—the first emperor of a united China.⁵

In addition to teaching and research, Chen has authored or edited a dozen books, several of which have been mentioned here. Her first book, *Applications of Operations Research Models to Libraries*,²¹ shows librarians how to apply analytical methods to assist them in effective management. This book was first runner-up for the ASIS Best Information Science Book in 1977. She edited *Quantitative Measurement and Dynamic Library Service*,²² in which 18 papers by 23 authors explain the application of statistical techniques to library management. In 1980, she authored *Zero-Base Budgeting in Library Management*.²³ This method of budgeting requires that a detailed justification for every item be provided for each new year. Zero-base budgeting is widely used in business, especially in lean years, because it forces managers to reevaluate their objectives and costs for each operation.

More recently, Chen and Susanna Schweizer, Simmons College, wrote a do-it-yourself manual for noninformation professionals who want to perform online searches.²⁴ She coedited with Stacey E. Bressler, currently with Apple Computers, Inc., *Microcomputers in Libraries*.²⁵ The book describes the fundamentals of microcomputers and the hardware and software available for library use. She also coedited with Hennon *Numeric Databases*,²⁶ which explains how data bases featuring statistics, tables, and other data can be useful to librarians. Chen is the editor of a monographic series, *Applications in Information Management and Technology in Libraries* published by Neal-Schuman Publishers. She serves as editor in chief of a new quarterly international journal, *Microcomputers for Information Management*, to be published by Ablex Publishing Corp. beginning in March 1984.

Chen is active in numerous professional organizations. Currently she is the director of the board of ASIS, councilor-at-large of the American Library Association, and chairs the Program Planning Committee of the American Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE). She is the past president of the New England chapter of ASIS, and chaired the Statistics and Survey Committee of the Medical Library Association. Chen is an active consultant in the US and abroad. She has worked with the Southeast Asia and Western Pacific regions of WHO, Engineering Information, Inc., Abt Associates, the National Library of Medicine, and Berkshire Community College.

The ASIS Outstanding Information Science Teacher Award is but one of several awards that ISI sponsors. With Annual Reviews, Inc., we cosponsor the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) Award for Excellence in Scientific Reviewing.²⁷ The Society for Social Studies of Science presents the ISI-sponsored John Desmond Bernal Prize for an outstanding scholarly achievement in the social studies of science.²⁸ And the Medical Library Association presents the ISI-sponsored Frank Bradway Rogers Information Advancement Award.²⁹

In memory of Sam Lazerow, ISI's late senior vice president of administration, we initiated a fellowship and a series of lectureships.³⁰ The Samuel Lazerow Fellowship for Outstanding Contributions to Acquisitions or Technical Services in an Academic or Research Library is given annually. Four Lazerow lectures are presented each year at Drexel, Columbia, and Indiana Universities and the University of Pittsburgh. These universities invite outstanding practitioners to speak to information science students and faculty. Beginning this year, ISI will

provide a £600 prize for the Aslib/ISI Award for Innovation in Information Management. ISI has established several fellowships for doctoral students of information science.³⁰ At the October ASIS meeting, Barbara Rapp, Drexel University, and Carol Tenopir, University of Illinois, Urbana, received such fellowships.

In order to publicize these awards and the importance of the role of librarians and information scientists, we have arranged to run an ad about the awards we sponsor in this issue of *CC*. A similar ad has been published in numerous journals including the *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association*, *Choice*, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *College and Research Libraries*, *College and Research Libraries News*, *Journal of Information Science*, *Library Journal*, *Online*, *RQ*, *Special Libraries*, *Who's Who in Special Libraries*, and *Wilson Library Bulletin*.

I urge anyone who wishes to nominate a candidate for the next ASIS Outstanding Information Science Teacher Award to write to: Outstanding Information Science Teacher Award, ASIS, 1010 16th Street, NW, Washington, DC, 20036. We at ISI are gratified by the results of the ASIS Outstanding Information Science Teacher Award. I would like to take this opportunity to personally congratulate Ching-chih Chen. For the benefit of her Chinese colleagues, the following expresses my heartiest congratulations:

给 Ching-chih Chen 道喜

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