



# YINTONG TALKS WITH...

Professor Paul Richardson

**P**ROFESSOR Paul Richardson is a luminary of the publishing industry having worked at a senior level for internationally renowned publishing groups Reed Elsevier, Harper Collins and Macmillan.

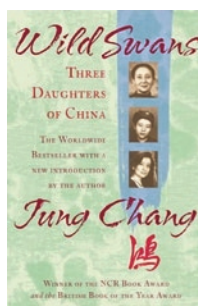
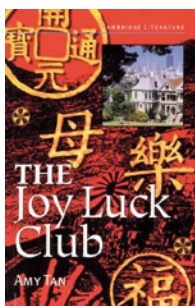
He set up the Oxford International Centre for Publishing Studies at Oxford Brookes University and is the first Professor of Publishing in the UK. He was also the first foreign research fellow at the Chinese Institute for Publishing Sciences and has been a frequent contributor to *China Book Business Report*, *China Publishers* and *China Publishing Today*. In addition he is a member of the international advisory board of China Book International, the state body concerned with the promotion of export licensing of rights in Chinese publications. As a relative newcomer to the publishing industry with my third book recently published (*UK Guide for Chinese Students*), this was someone I had to meet.

## 'Big three'

I attended Paul's presentation on the Chinese publishing industry at the Publishers Association last year. It is easy to find a sector report but how does the UK publishing industry compare with that of China and what business opportunities can both countries benefit from? Given the vast population in China, it is unsurprising that it is the largest book publishing market in the world by volume and the second largest by value. In terms of creativity, it is considered one of the 'big three' alongside the UK and the US.



The opportunities in the sector are enormous. China imports many more books and copyrights than it exports (four times more in 2008) and is actively seeking to compensate for its cultural deficit. The penetration of Chinese publishing into the UK market is tiny, with rare success stories for works such as those by overseas Chinese writers Amy Tan (*The Joy Luck Club*) or Jung Chang



(*Wild Swans*). The first Chinese publishers to enter the market directly with a UK subsidiary, CYPI, only set up in the UK in 2008.

I asked Paul whether censorship and state control were the cause of the slow pace of development in the industry and whether opportunities existed for joint ventures with British companies. He explained that gradual changes were beginning to have an impact. The Chinese book publishing industry is officially in the hands of around 570 state-owned publishing houses. He warned that while new entrants could benefit there were also challenges to be overcome. Piracy, for example, is still rife in China, with the result that Chinese and international publishers or authors are being deprived of income. There are no national distribution channels for books and there is a poor logistical infrastructure. Echoing my own experience when I researched the market in September last year, Paul agreed that many of the state-owned publishing houses lacked the requisite skills in business growth and marketing and thought that there was a strained connection between marketing efforts and the selection of titles by editors.

## Cooperative ventures

However, he still believes that China and the UK are very good international publishing partners. In recent years the state-owned publishing houses have been directed to become independent

joint stock enterprises, with the prospect of opening their businesses to private investment – some companies have even combined into groups capable of competing in the global market. So far foreign investment in book publishing has not been permitted, although there is a growing number of cooperative ventures between Western and Chinese publishers particularly in specific fields such as English language teaching and scientific, technical and medical publishing. Some British companies have already made good progress. Penguin for example, this year's winner of a Cathay Pacific Business Awards for its 'Continued Commitment' in China, has created a list of Chinese titles in the West in exchange for distribution of Western titles in China.

What would Paul recommend for budding Anglo-Chinese publishing partners? China is the guest of honour at the London Book Fair in 2012, ahead of the Olympics. This, he said, is surely the time for entrepreneurial British publishers to strike up relationships with their Chinese peers, and an opportunity for both parties to strike gold.

Yintong Betser is a China business specialist and the author of *Active Business Travel – China* [www.activeukchina.com](http://www.activeukchina.com)

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# Filling London's Forgotten Spaces

by Emily Morris

**I**T is hard to imagine that in a bustling city with life and cultural history that there are spots which have been underused, undeveloped and ultimately overlooked. Now a new competition seeks out the places with overgrown weeds and asks Brits to transform them so they may give life to new opportunities.

The Royal Institute of British Architects London's (RIBA) Forgotten Spaces competition calls on students, architects, artists, designers and planners throughout the UK to come up with ideas to develop overlooked land in the capital. Winning ideas last year included plans to build a public pool at Kingsway, put floating habitats on the East India Dock of the Thames, and develop reservoirs in the Lee Valley.

There are a variety of spaces for



Last year's winner: *Reservoir Roofs* by Gort Scott

Londoners to explore. They may be underpasses or flyovers, parking lots, or abandoned buildings. The area could be as small as a grassy verge. The proposal could be simple or complex, commercial or public, a piece of public art or a new building, the only requirement is that it responds to the area and serves a function for the local community.

It is an ideas programme, not initially involving actual plans for construction which opens up the scheme

to both functional and creative ideas. Typical sites may include some areas of Brixton, Camberwell and land in East London which has been untouched by the Olympics.

London 2012 is indeed an inspiration for the scheme as it has challenged architects and planners to develop parts of East London which had been largely forgotten.

RIBA London will announce the competition winners and award cash prizes with

sponsors Qatari Diar and Ordnance Survey at the exhibition launch event at Somerset House, London. First prize is £5,000, second prize £2,000 and third prize £1,000. In autumn this year the winners will be showcased at Somerset House.

The Forgotten Spaces 2011 London competition brief is available from the RIBA London website.

[www.architecture.com/forgottenspaceslondon](http://www.architecture.com/forgottenspaceslondon)



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**INSIDE:**



**Jules Pipe**  
On London and  
the UK Census  
page 18

**Business costs fall**  
page 4

**Apprenticeships**  
page 31



**London Fashion Week**  
page 3