

# A Window on China

Veteran publisher celebrates 70 years of telling China's story

By Yuan Yuan & Ji Jing

When Paul White first came to Beijing, his plan was to stay for a year. That was in 1984. In 2019, "I'm still here," the 76-year-old said with a smile.

He arrived from Yorkshire, the UK, to work as a copyeditor for Xinhua News Agency, getting the job partly due to having studied Chinese as his major at the University of London.

After his stint at Xinhua, White moved to the Foreign Languages Press (FLP), a publishing house affiliated with the China International Publishing Group (CIPG). Sharing Chinese thoughts with the outside world through translation since has been his lifetime pursuit. His most recent work is a more modern translation of *The Analects of Confucius*, selected sayings of the Chinese philosopher thought to have been compiled by his followers. The book came out with an audio.

White's plan is to improve his Chinese and translate more. "I'll probably do it forever and improve, I hope, every day. There's only one way to learn Chinese characters. That's to see them every day."

The CIPG, a Beijing-based publishing conglomerate intended for international readers, was founded on the same day as the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949. Despite changes in the international landscape as well as in the media over the past seven decades, White and his Chinese colleagues at the CIPG have remained true to the group's founding mission to share China's story.

## Making China heard

President Xi Jinping sent a letter congratulating the CIPG on its 70th anniversary, recognizing the group's role in making China's voice heard and promoting exchanges with foreign countries.

Xi said since China is increasingly connected to the outside world, the CIPG should carry forward its fine traditions, improve its capability and develop into a world-class, comprehensive international communication institution.

The CIPG was established as the international news division of the Central



British editor and translator Paul White at his home in Beijing

Government's national press administration. Qiao Guanhua, who later became minister of foreign affairs, headed the division. A group of Chinese professionals including foreign language experts, as well as foreign editors, were pooled together to create a channel for international readers to know more about China.

Many Chinese classics were translated into foreign languages at the CIPG. Prominent translator Yang Xianyi worked at the CIPG for decades with his British wife Gladys. They translated many masterpieces, including the 18th-century novel *A Dream of Red Mansions*, into English.

To present a real-time image of China to the world, the CIPG started publishing a series of periodicals in different languages. They included *China Pictorial*, a multilingual monthly magazine launched in 1950, using Chairman Mao Zedong's calligraphy for the Chinese title. *China Reconstructs* debuted in 1952, and is currently published as *China Today* in several foreign languages including English, French and Spanish, as well as in Chinese. *Beijing Review* was founded in

1958 as China's first national newsweekly in English.

"I have witnessed the CIPG's development," former CIPG Vice President Huang Youyi said at a symposium in Beijing on September 4 to celebrate the 70th anniversary, recalling his work experience since 1975. "Today international communication is facing many challenges and we must work harder to deliver the real picture of China to the world."

Huang is one of the experts that finalized the English version of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*, a compilation of Xi's speeches, interviews, letters and other works from November 2012 to September 2017 published by the FLP in two volumes.

The first volume was launched at the Frankfurt Book Fair in Germany in October 2014. The book has caught international attention.

"Xi's book speaks to China's vigorous domestic and international aspirations by offering some theoretically and practically important points on governance theory,"



Visitors at the CIPG pavilion at the Beijing International Book Fair on August 21

said Jon Taylor, a professor of political science at the University of Texas at San Antonio in the United States.

The second volume was released in October 2017. As of July, there had been 32 editions in 28 languages.

## Keeping pace

"We are ready to contribute more to introducing China to the world," CIPG President Du Zhanyuan said at the symposium. "To do so, we will continue developing talent, strengthening research and promoting integrated development."

In seven decades, the CIPG has produced about 80,000 kinds of books and magazines. It now publishes 34 magazines in 13 languages and produces over 4,000 book titles in more than 40 languages every year.

In 2000, China.org.cn, a website for news and information about China, was launched in 10 languages as the CIPG expanded online. Since then, there have been more multimedia projects like a series of short video

programs including *China Mosaic*, a commentary on topical issues related to China. The CIPG Digital Media Center was inaugurated in 2015 as part of efforts to embrace the new media, particularly social networking platforms.

The CIPG's think tank, the Academy of Contemporary China and World Studies, collaborates with peers around the world and conducts research in international communication.

In addition, the CIPG hosts a variety of activities to increase the outreach of the Chinese culture. *People's China*, its Japanese-language monthly, has been organizing the Panda Cup Japan Youth Essay Contest in Japan since 2014.

Daichi Nakashima, one of the recent contestants, wrote a letter to Xi expressing his interest in the Chinese language and culture. In June, ahead of the G20 Summit in Osaka, Xi replied to him, asking young people in both countries to make contributions to bilateral relations.

"Today, we enjoy a larger stage to spread

China's stories and we are integrating more advanced technologies," Huang said. "Yet professional translators who know the cultures of both China and other countries are still crucial to improving our work."

White echoed Huang's view, saying good translation is essential to transmit Chinese culture abroad.

There is a large receptive audience for Chinese culture outside China, according to White. "Abroad, there are more people interested in ancient Chinese than you think, especially in the U.S.," he said.

Currently, the CIPG has 26 overseas branches in 14 countries and regions. "We will enhance cultural exchanges and make friends with people from all over the world with our events and publications," Du said. ■

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