From Five Lakes and Four Seas

Online Expatriate Chinese Student Magazines and Community Mobilization

by

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To Yanyan Gao

Abstract

Expatriate Chinese students constitute a "knowledge diaspora" as opposed to the Chinese labour and trade diasporas that preceded them. The students are using online magazines to build up a virtual community by mobilizing Chinese culture, national identity, and community awareness among its widely scattered members. During their 11 years of evolution, these online publications have developed four patterns of operation, ranging from independent services to affiliations with expatriate Chinese student organizations. Small magazines have merged so there are now fewer but larger and more prosperous periodicals. These media are entering a transition from student magazines to magazines for expatriate professionals as the graduating generation of founders are not replaced by motivated current students. It can be expected that in the near future these magazines will keep on developing but at a more controlled pace, focusing on quality rather than on quantity.

Acknowledgments

I dedicate this paper to my wife Yanyan Gao. During the time when I was a graduate student at Carleton University and doing my research, she shouldered the whole responsibilities for our family. Moreover, as a computer professional, she gave me a lot of technical support. It is hard to imagine writing this paper without her very special kind of help.

I am grateful to my parents for having instilled in me the importance of education and industry since my early childhood. I also thank my seven-year-old daughter, Yannan, for her understanding why her dad could not play or read with her as much as he should have.

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Their pioneering work has not only greatly enriched the lives of the Chinese students

abroad, but also supplied me with first-hand materials for my research.

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Introduction: A Home in a Strange Land

When I came to Canada in the fall of 1997 to study journalism at Carleton University, I knew almost nobody either on or off campus. I felt that I was suddenly uprooted from the Chinese culture in which I was born and grew up. Throughout the years when I was in China, I had always been a member of one social organization or another. But suddenly I was excluded from any organizations. I had a feeling of loneliness. To get rid of such a feeling, I was eager to contact fellow expatriate Chinese students like myself. As a journalism graduate, I naturally turned to news media for clues. First, I turned to the mainstream English media. To my surprise, news coverage about China was both rare and biased.[1] Moreover, expatriate Chinese students were largely ignored. Then I turned to the local Chinese community newspapers. Despite the fact that there were four Chinese weeklies and bi-weeklies in Ottawa alone and that these tabloids were free and easy to find, I was not attracted. First, they were too commercial. More than half their pages were devoted to advertisements. In fact, news items were used only to fill up the space left over by the advertisements. Second, there was not enough news, to say nothing of news about the Chinese students living overseas. Third, they were always ridden with political intentions. Obviously, neither the mainstream media nor the Chinese community media were the kind of mass media for the Chinese students abroad.

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[1] For example, a <u>Newsweek</u> magazine article points out, "Our rhetoric distorts some basic truths about everyday life for the average Chinese Joe." For more information, please read "Seeing the Real China," by Michael Wenderoth, <u>Newsweek</u> October 27, 1997, p. 14.

Just as I was wondering how the Chinese students abroad communicated with one another, one of my neighbours, also a Chinese student, came to visit me and casually mentioned the Sunrise Chinese Library, a virtual Chinese library run by Chinese students in Montreal. It was through this online database that I came to know the online expatriate Chinese student magazines,[1] such as those covered in this paper. I suddenly felt that I had found my "organization" in this strange land.

As in the succession of previous actual organizations I had belonged to in China (first the Young Pioneers, then the Red Guards, and finally the Youth League), I found in the virtual organization of these online magazines a source of companionship, notice of events, insights into political goings-on, gossip, advice for dealing with difficulties...

As I became more and more involved in these magazines, I started to examine them from a journalistic prospective. While reading these publications, I began to ask myself questions like "Why are there these magazines?" "Who is running these magazines?" "What do they aim to do with these magazines?" "Why are they online, not printed magazines?" "What new forms of community and immigrant or expatriate experience might they foster?" I tried to find answers to these questions from our textbooks and libraries, but my efforts led nowhere. There is a significant gap in the literature. Much has been written about computer-mediated communication (CMC), but the literature contains almost no reference to organized online news publishing by

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[1] There is no established term for this type of media yet. I was tempted to use "online overseas Chinese student magazines," but the word "overseas" has a dual meaning in the Chinese context. It can either be used to refer to people who live away from their native lands temporarily or those who have rejected their homeland to live abroad generation after generation yet still consider themselves as Chinese racially. I have decided to use "expatriate" to mean only those people who are living away from their home countries for a long period of time. They are not necessarily forced into exile. In the subsequent uses, the term "online expatriate student magazines" refers to those publications by and for Chinese students unless otherwise indicated.

diasporas. As a journalism major and an expatriate Chinese student myself, I felt obliged to find these answers.

I began to pay more attention to these magazines, but soon I realized the emergence of the online expatriate student magazines was not an isolated journalistic phenomenon. To study them I could not constrain myself to journalism only. I had to examine the various social contexts in which the magazines were born, so I started to position these media against a broad social backdrop. I found that several things had contributed to the birth of the magazines at the same time. First, the globalization trend had laid out the foundation for the existence of the magazines, because it produced the expatriate Chinese students, both the creators and consumers of the magazines. Second, technical advances in communication, especially the wide application of the Internet, had made it possible for the existence and development of the online magazines. Third, the characteristics of the expatriate Chinese students had determined the operation of the media.

A key concept that I have used to examine the online expatriate student magazines is what I call the concept of knowledge diaspora. Although Chinese people could be seen in Europe and North America as far back as the early 19th century, there are obvious differences between those in history and today's generation. The former were dominantly physical labourers. They were not well educated. Their goal was largely to earn as much money as possible to send back home to support their families. The latter are almost exclusively knowledge-oriented. They had already received good education before going abroad. Though they also wish to earn more money, their goal is more than money. They have a stronger desire for communication, information, and knowledge. Moreover, they

are technically advantaged to achieve their goal since a large proportion have information technology and its applications as their fields of expertise. Such a nature explains the keen enthusiasm of today's expatriate Chinese students in running online media.

Before I started my study, I assumed that since online media were a new type of media, the online expatriate student magazines should be performing new functions. But as my study goes deeper, I find that although the online magazines have obvious advantages over the traditional Chinese community media, such as being boundless, timely, and cheap, fundamentally speaking the functions of the two are the same. Both types of media are tools used to build up and mobilize the expatriate Chinese community. The only difference is the way these functions are implemented. While the traditional media depended more on printed sources and were geographically restricted, the online expatriate student magazines are making use of modern technological advances. They are reaching a far more widely scattered community in a more effective way. Such a difference partially comes from technical innovations, but more importantly, from the new nature of today's expatriate Chinese students as a knowledge diaspora.

Drawing from the best information available, this paper analyses the birth, evolution, and roles of the online expatriate student magazines. It tries to create a picture of how the Chinese students overseas are exploiting online media to build up a virtual community for collective identity. By doing so, it also aims to address a gap in the literature. Although the focus of this paper is on the online expatriate Chinese student magazines, the situations with which I deal in the following chapters will likely be similar to groups of knowledge diasporas from other countries. I have focused on the experience of the expatriate Chinese students since they are the pioneers in the field. A knowledge of

how the Chinese knowledge diaspora is reacting to the new changes in mass communication should have implications for our general understanding of the ethnic media in the information age. My basic argument is that the knowledge diasporas are using new mass media for better communication and information. The functions of these online media are fundamentally the same as those of the traditional media, although the sameness of the role is nonetheless complicated by the dispersion of the audience and the rapidity of the interchange of discussion via these online media.

I hope this paper will provide those who are interested in ethnic media, especially expatriate media, with some useful insights into the subject. Examination of the overall situation and the specific cases illuminates both the macro and micro sides of the topic. While I focus on the analytical side of the topic, substantial description is necessary because non-Chinese readers are unlikely familiar with the nature of expatriate Chinese students and their online magazines. The descriptive sections serve as supportive evidence for later analytical conclusions. The merger of description and analysis aims to help readers go beyond the surface phenomena.

Though I have tried to put the case of the expatriate Chinese students and scholars into a broad conceptual context, due to lack of existing literature, in many situations, I have to rely on my personal observation and analysis.

Chapter 1 of this paper lays out the conceptual framework for the subject. With special focus on globalization, new technologies, and virtual community, it explores the overall background against which the online expatriate student magazines were born. Chapter 2 first examines the changing patterns of expatriate Chinese from coolie labour diaspora to trade diaspora, and finally to knowledge diaspora. Then the chapter explores

major characteristics of today's Chinese knowledge diaspora represented by expatriate students. Such an understanding of the group is significant, because the magazines are run by the group and for this group. Then the chapter reviews the birth of the student magazines. It also summarizes the general features of these publications. Chapter 3 analyses the roles of the magazines in helping build up a virtual community among the Chinese students abroad. It describes in detail how these magazines are used to mobilize culture, national identity, and community awareness. Chapter 4 surveys the evolution of the magazines, fitting their development patterns into four models. Chapter 5 discusses the possibility of the student magazines reaching a readership inside China. It examines both the magazines as information senders and China as an information receiver. Assessment of some related key factors contributing to such a possibility shows that at least at the present stage, the magazines are not prepared to target those inside China nor is China as a state ready to accept these magazines. The concluding chapter, Chapter 6, looks at the problems the student magazines are facing. In this chapter, I propose some solutions to these problems and discuss some of the new trends noticeable among the magazines. The chapter predicts the future of this new type of media by concluding that the online expatriate student magazines will go on developing, but at a more controlled pace with more focus put on quality than quantity.

Chapter 1 Conceptual Context

1.1 Globalization, International Migration, and Knowledge Diasporas

The emergence and advances of "high technology" have ushered in a new era. This era, as Richard L. Bernal (1995:ix) describes, is characterized by "a comprehensive globalization." The globalization process has resulted in a single global economy. Adams and Gupta (1997:2) identify three manifestations of this economic integration: the internationalization of production, a rapid global dissemination of new technologies, and the international migration of people in their insatiable quest for a better standard of living.

The relationship between globalization and international migration has been discussed by many researchers. Clive Gamble (1994) claims that the first indication of globalization is the near global distribution of homo sapiens. Hatton and Williamson (1998:231) believe that globalization played the critical role in contributing to global migration after they examined the three epochs of mass migration growth experienced in the late nineteenth century, in the years between 1914 and 1950, and in the late 20th century. Karim (1998:2) points out the importance of locating the diasporic phenomenon within the context of globalization processes. He draws our attention to the contributions to diasporas by improved transportation and communication technologies. He also believes in a connection between international economic and trade patterns and human migration patterns. According to him, diasporas are emerging as key players in globalization processes (1998:4). Cohen (1997:157) summarizes globalization's impacts

on diasporas into five relevant aspects: 1) a world economy; 2) forms of international migration; 3) the development of "global cities"; 4) the creation of cosmopolitan and local cultures; and 5) a deterritorialization of social identity.

This relationship is further supported by statistics in recent years. According to figures from the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1997:835), foreign or immigrant populations in the major industrialized countries increased at varied rates between 1982 and 1993. For example, the number of the foreign-born population in the United States jumped from 14 million in 1980 to well over 19 million in 1990. The phenomenon of international migration is also happening to those countries that were not traditionally considered as receivers of mass migrants, indicating Japan and Austria, to name just two. Though many researchers have complained that the U.S. census seriously and regularly undercounts minority populations (Soruco,1996:22), the growing tendency in international migration is obvious. One researcher estimates 100 million people are involved in global migration (Weiner,1995:2).

Globalization is by no means a new story (Spybey,1996). But the current developments in the field are clearly different from those in history. They are substantially contributed to by the "technological revolution." For a new, increasingly numerous sort of migrant, knowledge plays the critical role in the whole process. This shift has influenced our world society in virtually every aspect.

At least two new trends have been detected in international migration as the result of such a shift. First, knowledge diasporas are increasing.

The word "diaspora" comes from the Greek verb *speiro* (to sow) and the preposition *dia* (over). Originally, it tended to refer primarily to the dispersal of the Jews

into exile from Israel. Acquiring a sinister and brutal meaning, it implied an element of "being forced away" from home into exile. But in recent years, the word has been increasingly used to denote a broader meaning. Many people abroad have also defined themselves as diasporas though they are not passive victims of persecution (Cohen, 1997: ix).

The idea of diasporas varies greatly. However, some common features of a diaspora do exist. Among other common traits, all diasporic communities settle outside their natal territories, claim loyalty to "the old country," and have a sense of co-ethnicity with others of a similar background (ibid.).[1]

Cohen (1997) studies the different kinds of diasporas throughout history and classifies them into six categories: 1) Jewish diasporas; 2) victim diasporas; 3) labor and imperial diasporas; 4) trade diasporas; 5) Sikh diaspora; and 6) cultural diasporas. But none of these classifications properly fits today's waves of young Chinese heading abroad or equivalent migrants of other nationalities. Therefore, I would rather call them "knowledge diasporas."[2]

Though sharing some of the common features of previous diasporas, these elite migrants, represented mainly by technology professionals and university students(Wang,

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[1] For more details about the common features of a diaspora, see Appendix 1.

[2] Some people may view knowledge as a form of commodity and therefore think "knowledge diasporas" should be categorized as a type of "trade diaspora." This way of thinking ignores the differences in terms of how membership in the diaspora community is determined. Membership in the Jewish, victim, labor and imperial, Sikh, and cultural diasporas are determined by pre-existing group identity beyond the control of individuals. Persons may enter trade diasporas in part due to individual characteristics, but are often going as a delegate for the family or community which provides the resources or support. In the knowledge diasporas, membership is solely determined by a specific individual's intellectual potentials and ability.

G.,1992; Sowell,1996), have unique traits. They are equipped with knowledge of the latest developments in such high-tech fields as computer science, telecommunications, and information technologies, depending on their brains, not physical strength, for survival and success in the age of globalization.

The term "knowledge diaspora" has a triple meaning. First, different from those traditionally physical diasporas, it is a diaspora of those with knowledge. They are not forced abroad or to stay abroad in the sense of being driven out by soldiers or persecution. Rather, these knowledge-holders are pushed into exile because the hi-tech environment at home deprives them of substantial opportunity and free choice for personal development.

Second, it is a diaspora that is actually driven into exile by knowledge. Such a dispersal occurs because these people possess the highly-marketable knowledge that enables them to study or work abroad and not to return to their homeland. Without such a knowledge advantage, they would still be at home.

Lastly, this is a diaspora of knowledge in the sense that apart from these actual human individuals living in "exile," the specialized knowledge that they have gathered at home and abroad is also "in exile" and scattered in a "knowledge diaspora" parallel to the human one. These technical experts go into exile with their expertise, abilities, and potentials.[1]

An indication of the growing knowledge diasporas is the rising number of diasporic university students. According to the U.S. Department of Education (1997:456), foreign students enrolled in institutions of higher education in the United States and its

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1 Part of the ideas in the discussion about the triple meaning of "knowledge diaspora" comes from personal correspondence with David Tait, School of Journalism and Communication, Carleton University.

outlying areas increased by 45.5 per cent from 311,880 in 1980 and 1981 to 453,787 in 1995 and 1996, with the increase most notable among those from Asia. Over history, many countries have seen their young people pursuing studies abroad, but this population has never reached the current extent.

Another thing that separates the new knowledge diasporas from the old ethnic groups is the shifting destination patterns (Cohen,1997:162). While the old diasporas usually followed some traditional channels of migration, such as colonization and linguistic connections, knowledge diasporas nowadays are scattered to all lands to accommodate the globalization process. This is not only true of diasporas with different origins, but also typical of those within the same specific diasporas. It is no longer strange that unexpected people turn up in the most unexpected places. The "transnations" of diasporic communities have become significant aspects of the globalization process (Karim,1998:1).

These changes, among other things, have created the necessity and capability for the new generation of knowledge diasporas to explore new ways to maintain global links and form communities among themselves in order to assert their identities and ease resettlement in strange environments.

1.2   Ethnic Identity, Community, and Mass Media

Opinions are varied in the academic community in terms of what global migrants will do after they leave their home countries. Basically speaking, there are two contradictory perspectives (Soruco,1996:27). First, there is the "cultural assimilation" perspective. Advocates of this concept focus on cultural adoption and the process of

building consensus between the host and immigrant populations. They assume that as the immigrants become more educated, more familiar with the host culture and the language, and more successful in the marketplace, they will have an increased chance of assimilation. This is so because they not only seek the acceptance of the host culture but also work hard toward this goal. Consequently, they will develop a more positive attitude toward the host culture (Thomas and Znaniecki,1927; Child,1943; Handlin,1951).

This assumption is questioned by researchers supportive of an opposite perspective, called "conflict and consciousness." They suggest that immigrants can remain loyal to their own culture after immigration. The works of Bach (1978:536-58), Castells (1975:33-66), Glazer (1954:158-173), Portes et al (1980;1982;1984;1989) draw readers' attention to the fact that many immigrants and their descendants have not blended into the mainstream of America. Instead, they prefer to remain as distinct national communities. This perspective also suggests that education and success raise the immigrants' ethnic consciousness as well as their awareness of the social distance separating them from the dominant group. It argues that ethnic awareness, intensified by media use, leads to an increase in negative attitudes toward the host culture.

The actual situation among the global migrants is more complicated than this not-A-but-B model. Nevertheless, as neither assimilation nor successful integration is working (Orfield,1998:ix), and also because of an increasing tension about the presence of the diasporic population (Mitra,1997:57), many scholars agree that ethnic identity is important to ethnic groups because it gives them power. Trueba and Zou (1998:1) explain this relationship between ethnic identity and power:

As ethnic groups abandon their home countries and towns of origin, they carry with them a worldview, a lifestyle, a language and a family structure that they try to maintain in the host country. For as long as they maintain their cultural markets and other symbolic components of their identity, they seem to muster the energy and courage needed to adapt and survive. In fact, as immigrants and ethnic groups reaffirm and redefine their identities in contrast with other groups as well as mainstream peoples, they seem to hold power, to control their destiny, and to succeed in their risky ventures as immigrants.

An effective way to build and maintain ethnic identity is to form a community (Jones,1995:14), because a community creates "not only individual benefits for participants but also a group strength" (Watson,1997:102). Eileen Yeo and Stephen Yeo (1988:230-231) suggest that despite its competing meanings, community is a positive quality of relationship. It holds something in common, gives a feeling of common identity and, most positively of all, creates a quality of mutual caring in human relations. Community can function as a social defence system. It serves particularly to contain or to avoid fear and anxiety (Morley and Robin,1995:193).

The identity desire of the diasporas manifests itself clearly in the ethnic enclaves that earlier diasporas built in metropolitan areas, such as Chinatown. These towns within towns kept the disadvantaged newcomers mutually connected and supported.

An important feature of a community is the commonality among its members. The shared values not only reflect themselves in such overall nominal parameters as gender, religion, and residential locale, but also are determined by graduated parameters, like wealth, education, and power (Schmitz,1997:82). Therefore, it is hard to imagine that a knowledge diaspora would form a community with non-knowledge diasporas, or fit into the existing communities formed by people who share the same nominal parameters with

them but differ from them in graduated parameters. A telling example is the fact that despite the overall commonality in history and culture, expatriate people from mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong form their own separate communities in their host countries.

Although a community is more likely to be formed among similar, clustered persons because of their frequent connection, as Jones (1995:12) points out, connection does not inherently make for community, nor does it lead to any necessary exchange of information, meaning, and sense-making at all. Community must involve communication, because communities are held together by communication (Berger,1995:10). It is through this process that culture is passed on and consequently identity is built. The more things members of a community share in common, the higher the quality of their communication process (Berger,1995:11).

According to Berger (1995:11-12), communication has four levels: intrapersonal, interpersonal, small group, and mass. Mass communication, which involves the use of print or electronic media, communicates to large numbers of people who are located in various places, often scattered all over the country or world. Mass media play a critical role in mass communication. Theorists of mass communication have therefore written much about the powerful and unique ways in which mass media help to form communities and identities.

In this aspect, the functionalist view is representative. This media theory believes that mass media have centripetal effects. They have a capacity to unite scattered individuals into the same community by providing a common set of values, ideas, and

information and helping to form identities. Ordinary people depend on media for self-identity and consciousness (McQuail,1994:71).

Warren Breed echoed this view by saying that mass communication has the function of maintaining socio-cultural integration. By expressing, dramatizing and repeating cultural patterns, both the traditional and the newly emerging, the media reinforce tradition and. at the same time. explain new roles (Breed.1964:173-83). McLuhan (1965) implied that identities are drawn from the systematic and widely shared messages of the mass media. Other researchers (Stamm.1985; Jackson.1971;Cox and Morgan,1973; Murphy,1976) have also shown that mass media have generally supported and promoted identity and values of particular communities.

Traditionally, diasporas have relied on face-to-face interaction, conventional media such as newspapers, and more modern communicative channels such as radio and television for communication within their communities (Spichard,1996; Soruco,1996; Root,1997). But strictly speaking, these media are local and regional, targeted mainly at geographically concentrated audiences. But today's migrants, particularly the knowledge diasporas, are widely scattered across the world, working in similar professions or studying in similar environments but spatially distanced from each other (Mitra,1997:57). This increasing diversity trend has greatly challenged the existing ways of communicating. It asks for more effective alternative mass media that today's ubiquitous global migrants can use to form their own transnational communities and build identity.

1.3   New Technology, the Internet, and Virtual Community

Never before in history have we seen so many new technologies pop up as in this

age of electronics: computer networks, information systems, digital communication, high-

volume fibre-optic transmission, large-scale electronic publishing ...Variations and

combinations of these technologies have woven a globe-spanning web. But the most

vivid embodiment of these new technologies is perhaps the Internet. It is also the largest

network in the web. With the Internet, people can do almost whatever they can think of:

exchange electronic mail, transfer files, search databases, read articles, listen to radio,

watch television, participate in discussion groups, court unseen sweethearts. Since the

Internet has greatly facilitated our daily communication by bringing once remote regions

of the world into constant contact, more and more people feel that our world is

increasingly like a "global village" or "earthspace."

The growth of the Internet has been explosive. As of November 1997, there were

more than 36 million people on the Internet in the United States alone (GVU,1997). This

momentum is expected to continue in the years to come (McLaughlin *et al*,1995:90).

But technological innovations do not only result in technological advances in our

society. They also transform the way in which humans relate to each other and form

communities (Mitra,1997:56). The Internet is no exception. Traditionally, the notion of

community has been associated with physical proximity (ibid.:55). When talking of

community, one tends to think of a particular place where people know and meet one

another through daily physical contact. Nevertheless, the Internet has completely changed

this convention by creating a so-called "imagined community." The idea of an imagined

community, to some extent, is suggested by Benedict Anderson (1983), who believes that

communities and nations can be imagined around shared cultural practices. This notion is also shared by Rheingold (1993a). The power of the Internet lies in what David Harvey calls "time-space compression" (1989). With the Internet, things are no longer defined and distinguished in the conventional way by their boundaries, borders or frontiers. The Internet has created new "communities" across space and time, bringing together otherwise dispersed groups around common experience. Through the Internet, we have seen "the construction of a new experience of virtual space and time and of virtual community" (Morley and Robins,1995:133).

The Internet has also changed our media patterns. As Wilson Dizard (1997) points out, the Internet has led us to "the third mass media transformation in history" – a transition to computer-based production, storage, and distribution of information and entertainment. Unlike earlier media, online media such as electronic newspapers and magazines, the World Wide Web, and Web radio and television have enabled people to access uncensored information in real-time no matter where they are.

Being non-linear, largely non-hierarchical, and relatively cheap, online media offer some unique advantages for diasporic groups residing on various continents. The worldwide networks allow for qualitatively and quantitatively enhanced linkages among members of the diasporic communities. "The ability to exchange messages with individuals on the other side of the planet and to have access to community information almost instantaneously changes remarkably the dynamics of diaspora" (Karim,1998:21). For these and other reasons, diasporic groups are making extensive use of online media.

1.4   Study of Diasporic Communication

As the globalization process has diminished the importance of national borders

and promoted growing global linkages among non-state actors, diasporic connections are

becoming increasingly significant (Karim,1998:1). The traditional ways of

communicating within diasporic communities are more and more supplemented by

transnational links, which make use of new communication technologies such as the

World Wide Web, Usenet and Listserv. These alternatives have enabled the transnational

diasporic communities to overcome structural communication barriers. In fact, diasporic

groups were among the pioneers in the application of new media (ibid.).

Nevertheless, the application of new communication technologies by diasporic

groups has received scant attention among researchers (Karim,1998:1). Two factors may

have contributed to this scholarly indifference. First, studying ethnic groups is time-

consuming and not easy (Soruco,1996:xii). It requires a thorough understanding of the

relevant ethnic cultures and languages. This extra difficulty has challenged many scholars

who do not share the ethnicity being studied. Second, apart from a few studies such as

those by Mitra and Karim, there is little on the subject to go by today (Karim,1998:1).

Moreover, most studies tend to focus only on a section of the diasporic community in a

particular location rather than scattered across the world. But how diasporic people

communicate and form communities is not only important to the diasporas themselves

but also to the rest of the world. This is so because these people, once established in

business and professions, can play a pivotal role in the culture, politics, and economics of

many of their host countries (Mitra,1997:57).

This paper explores the field of diasporic communication by focusing on expatriate Chinese students and scholars. As the diasporic groups of expatriate Chinese students and scholars have seen a steady increase in number and geographic diversity in recent years, they have effectively used the new online media, especially the online magazines, to develop their own networks of communication and have obtained very successful experience (Mueller and Tan,1997). In addition, they have used the online media to form a virtual community and create their common identity. Their practice may give some provoking insights into the study of diasporic communication.

Chapter 2 Online Expatriate Student Magazines: An Overview

Although online media include a variety of options ranging from electronic newspapers to Web TV, online expatriate student media mainly take the form of online magazines. This is because, on the one hand, these magazines do not have as high technical requirement as do other online media, like Web radio and TV. On the other hand, they can have a wide scope of coverage, and do not depend as much on timeliness as does news. Though the origin of the first publication was quite hasty, the emergence and development of this kind of new media within the community of the expatriate Chinese students were natural and unavoidable. Through years of evolution, the magazines have taken on some common characteristics.

In this chapter, I will briefly review and analyse these general traits. I will also explore a couple of common questions related to these characteristics. But in the final analysis, the formation of the characteristics of new media is determined by the community itself. As Bar-Haim (1992:206) points out, the range and limits of the features in an ethnic magazine are compatible with the general collective identity of the community. It is impossible to talk about the magazines without touching on the community out of which they are born, but first we need to understand at least generally the history of Chinese diasporas.

2.1 Expatriate Chinese: Changing Patterns of Diaspora

The experience of expatriate Chinese in the Americas and Europe dates back at least to the early 19th century. Roughly speaking, throughout history expatriate Chinese have seen three patterns of diasporas: coolie labour diaspora, trade diaspora, and knowledge diaspora.

The labour coolie diaspora was formed in the early 1800s and continued for almost a century (Campbell,1969). Such a large outward migration was contributed to mainly by famine, feuds, overpopulation, devastating economic upsets, and unstable social conditions in China (Campbell,1969:xvii; Wong, 1988:27). The Chinese coolies, as they were called, were exclusively physical labourers, confined to unskilled work. They were typically male youths from China's southern coastal areas, forced to leave their homeland in the hope of making hard-earned money to remit back home to support their families. As a rule, these people had low wages, unbelievable living conditions, and were deprived of family life (Campbell,1969:32-33).

The Chinese coolie labour diaspora, in common with what Cohen (1997) calls "labour and imperial diasporas," has a strong hue of slavery, because the emigration was quickened and extended by the "credit-ticket" and "contract" systems. Under the credit-ticket system, which was seen as early as around 1823, Chinese brokers covered the expenses for the coolies to emigrate. Before the debt was paid off, the coolie was in the control of the broker. The contract system was established by foreign business people after 1845. The British especially used it to attract cheap Chinese labourers to fill jobs in developing parts of the Empire. Under this system, foreigners went to China at different periods to solicit the services of Chinese labourers under written contracts to work for a

given number of years. The Chinese coolies were offered "a trifle advanced to give their hungriness food, a suit of clothes to cover their nudity. a dollar or two for their families" (Campbell,1969:95) before they were transported to foreign lands. It was a system little different from "buying and selling of pigs" (ibid.).

In fact, the two systems were born to substitute the slavery that was becoming increasingly unpopular in the "New World" countries during the 19th century (Campbell,1969:xviii). As a result of slave emancipation. these sparsely populated countries attempted to replace African slaves with the Asian indentured labourers. in particular, Indians and Chinese.

These two systems fuelled not only Chinese emigration to Southeast Asia, but also a large migration to North America and Europe. It was estimated that between 1852 and 1875, about 200,000 Chinese coolies migrated into the United States. Among them. at least 80 per cent left under the credit-ticket system. From 1881 to 1885, a total of more than 17,000 Chinese came to Canada to build the Canadian Pacific Railway (HarryCon. 1982:22). In 1876, as many as 30,000 Chinese were employed in San Francisco in such fields as domestic work, canned fruit and pickle factories. fisheries, and laundries (Campbell,1969:35). Some researchers claim it was the effective competing power of the Chinese coolies in the unskilled labour market that gave rise to the anti-Chinese sentiment in their host countries (ibid.:43).

Starting from the late 1870s, the nature of expatriate Chinese communities underwent significant changes as the social and economic conditions changed in their host countries. In North America, for example, at least four reasons were seen for these changes: 1) completion of the transcontinental railways; 2) closing of many mining

companies; 3) high unemployment rate; and 4) emergence of anti-Chinese feelings (Wong, 1988:78). The adaptive strategy adopted by the expatriate Chinese gave birth to the formation of the trade diaspora. In order to avoid competition with the white population in the labour market, the expatriate Chinese started in the late 1880s to develop a new survival technique -- occupational specialization. Those former coolies and people who had intended to go abroad to work as labourers gradually disengaged themselves from labour industries and started to run their own businesses (ibid.:36).

A couple of traits can be seen concerning this early trade diaspora. First, the Chinese were mainly involved in non-competitive fields, such as hand laundries and Chinese restaurants. Second, the businesses were small as most of the expatriate Chinese owners were originally labourers who had no command over capital. Third, the organizations of Chinese firms rested upon such traditional relationships as kinship, clanship, ritual brotherhood, and common locality of origin (Wong,1988:79,36,116). Until the 1970s, these basic characteristics of the Chinese trade diaspora remained unchanged, though there were numerous re-organizations and renovations (ibid.,166). Businesses run by the Chinese trade diaspora still concentrated on the Chinese restaurants, laundries, garment factories, gift shops, and grocery stores (ibid.).

After 1949 when the People's Republic of China was established, the Chinese trade diaspora was mainly composed of people from Hong Kong and Taiwan. This trade diaspora received a massive addition in the years preceding the 1997 return of Hong Kong to the People's Republic. Meanwhile, the children of previous generations of Chinese merchants of the trade diaspora were entering and succeeding in the professions in the West as racial barriers weakened in the 1960s. By the 1980s, the Chinese diaspora's

North America-born children were well represented in professional and scientific schools and occupations.

At the same time, liberalization of educational and travel policies in mainland China launched what became the third wave of Chinese diaspora: the knowledge diaspora of expatriate students spreading across the world. In the struggle for the People's Republic, Mao Zedong inspired Communist cadres with the cry that they had hailed "from five lakes and four seas" (the equivalent of the four corners of China) and had joined together for a common revolutionary goal. Half a century later, young Chinese poured outward from those same five lakes and four seas, again sharing the same goal -- but this time, it was to seek new knowledge and opportunities abroad.

2.2   Expatriate Chinese Students: Globalization and Collective Identity

The current expansion of global capitalism has brought into full play a new round of "time-space compression." As people, capital, commerce, and images flow globally, the social meanings of space and power are reordered. What used to be a distant and misty place becomes suddenly close and clear. As Jameson (1984:64) points out, people's everyday experience is dominated by spatial images and spatial categories. They are more than ever concerned about other places, and these places' social meanings to themselves. They use the new images and representations of other social and cultural spaces to imagine development and modernization and to define their own relative positions on that continuum. However, new images and representations of the other "place" are closely associated with motives for outward mobility when this other place is perceived as being far ahead on the development and modernization continuum

(Liu,1997:94). Innovations in transportation and telecommunication have further

overcome traditional spatial boundaries and given people more freedom of mobility. It is

against this backdrop that the globalization of the expatriate Chinese students takes place.

Though there were people who went abroad for studies in the early 1980s, it was

not until the middle of the decade that young Chinese started to go abroad en masse.

Statistics from the U.S. Department of Education (1997:456) show that in 1980 and 1981,

there were only 2,770 Chinese students enrolled in institutions of higher education in the

United States and its outlying areas. But in 1995-1996, the number jumped to 39,613. In

Canada, the number of Chinese students has also increased. In 1975, there were only 199

undergraduates and 41 graduate students from mainland China. In 1992, however, the

total climbed drastically to 2,967 (Statistics Canada,1992:28).

But North America is only part of the globalization process of Chinese students

and scholars. It is estimated that during the time from 1978 to 1998, the Chinese

government sent more than 40,000 scholars abroad for further studies. They were

scattered in over 100 countries and regions -- 32 per cent in the United States, Canada,

and Australia, 39 per cent in Western and Northern Europe, 14 per cent in Japan and

other Asian countries. At the same time, Chinese employers sent 80,000 of their

employees abroad to study, and more than 120,000 Chinese left their country to study at

their own expense. Altogether, about 250,000 Chinese left for overseas studies in the last

20 years. In 1998, it was estimated that more than 150,000 of these Chinese students were

still studying abroad or working (Wang, Z.1998).[1]

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[1] Figures conflict depending on sources. According to statistics released by the State Commission of Education in Beijing in January 1997, since the beginning of the 1980s, a total of 270,000 Chinese had gone abroad for studies. Only 90,000 people had returned upon completion of their studies. For more information, see Yang, Xiaosheng (1998).

There are both external and internal factors that have contributed to the globalization of the expatriate Chinese students. The "pull" from without first comes from the previously mentioned overall globalization process that has affected every corner of the world. The globalization of the expatriate Chinese students is only part of the whole trend. Second, the globalization of the expatriate Chinese students is closely associated with the favourable changes that some of the major anglophone countries have made in their immigration policies. The United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand all have passed new legislation that allows people with investment capital and technical expertise to immigrate and become citizens more easily (Mitchell, 1997).

The "push" from within comes both from China's historical tradition and contemporary development. Historically, China had an age-old tradition that associated social power with upward and outward mobility (Liu, 1997:92). For centuries, the Chinese believed that the closer they were to the top of the social hierarchy, the more powerful they would be. Due to transportation inconvenience, social mobility in China often meant physical movement. People had to travel from rural areas to urban centers or even abroad to gain access to commercial opportunities, education, or high office (Skinner, 1977). The close relationship between mobility and power was further strengthened after the national examination system was institutionalized through the Tang (AD 618-907) and Song (AD 960-1297) dynasties (Ho, 1962). This notion of mobility and power became an integral part of the social hierarchy in late imperial China and did not change much even in the Mao era (Liu, 1997:92).

This conception of social meanings of mobility and power has been fuelled by China's economic reforms in the 1980s and 1990s. Since it opened its door to the outside

world in the early 1980s, China has been increasingly integrating itself into global

capitalism. The economic reforms in China have not only brought an influx of foreign

investment, but also uncontrollable flows of information and media images of the outside

world. In the Mao era, the Chinese people were told by Mao and his Communist

colleagues that two thirds of the world population was still living in misery, and the goal

of the Chinese people was to liberate them. This made the Chinese people feel they were

the most powerful people in the world. But the economic reforms have suddenly exposed

them to a totally different outside world, characterized by high living standards and

modern technologies in the West. The long-standing conceit of the Chinese faltered

overnight as they realized the outside world was much better off than their own and they

were far from the center of power. As they now associate the outside world with wealth

and power, naturally they developed a strong desire for global mobility in order to get

access to this power. This gives rise to a nationwide "leave-the-country-fever"[1]

(Liu,1997:174). To many Chinese, to cross national boundaries means to reach the

location of wealth. It is a means to gain social power.

However, not everyone on mainland China has equal access to global mobility.

According to Doreen Massey (1993), global capitalism redefines the geometries of power

by producing social, economic, and political differentiations associated with mobility.

Some people benefit more than others from the new "time-space compression." In their

efforts to go abroad, the latest generation of Chinese intellectuals has obvious advantages

over their parental generation. First, they are young. Most of those who can go abroad to

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[1] This is a direct translation from the Chinese *pinyin* "chu guo re." The phenomenon first occurred in the
early 1980s and is still surging at present.

study are in their 20s and 30s.[1] Age is the greatest capital of the younger generation. It

means that they have energy and time to struggle for a better future. They are also in

better physical condition, which enables them to tolerate the difficulty and struggle facing

them once they cross the national boundary. Second, they have better command of

foreign languages, or learn them more quickly. Besides, generally speaking, they are

better educated. Before going abroad, a majority of them had received university

education in China and quite a few had years of work experience in scientific and

technological fields. Many played leading roles in their fields. This education and work

background make them more acceptable to foreign universities and societies, because

they possess "portable skills" (Wang,G.1992) that their countries of residence need.

There aren't many published sources that describe the collective identity of the Chinese

students overseas. Nevertheless, some common characteristics of the group of people are

noticeable.

First, they are geographically dispersed. Though the United States is the first

choice for many Chinese youth who wish to go abroad to study, their destinations are not

limited to North America. They also go to other parts of the world, such as Europe,

Oceania, and Japan.[2] As a matter of fact, they go to almost any places that are supposed

to be more developed than their home country or have better opportunities for personal

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[1] According to a recent survey conducted among 1,500 readers by "*EduBridge*," a U.S.-based Chinese
online magazine. 50 per cent of the Chinese who apply to study in the United States are between 20 and
25 years old. 30 per cent are between 25 and 30, and 10 per cent are over 30. Among those Chinese who
are already studying or working in the United States. 80 per cent are between 30 and 50. For more
information, see *EduBridge*'s February issue, 1999, at http://edubridge.com

[2] For example, *China News Digest* (CND), a free online news/information service that is run by expatriate
Chinese students and students-turned-professionals and targets at the community of Chinese students
overseas, reports readers in more than 87 countries and regions in Africa, Asia, Oceania, Europe, North
America and South America. See "CND Enters 10th Year of Internet Publishing" at
http://www.cnd.org/whatiscnd.html

development. In many cases, they are also widespread even in the same host country. Chinese students can be found almost everywhere.

Second, as stated above, expatriate Chinese students, as a whole, have a high degree of education. Most of them are in master's or doctoral programs.[1] They are notably concentrated in marketable fields of study such as computer science, telecommunications, and business. This is not a mere coincidence. It reflects their pursuit of ways to be able to stay and settle abroad to seek social power. Many expatriate Chinese students have the experience of changing their majors in order to remain abroad (Liu,1997:108).

It is important to note that education is not the primary purpose for many young Chinese to go abroad. It is only a means to obtain opportunities for overseas mobility – a springboard to go from this space to the other space. "The core connotation of the term 'overseas student' lies in traveling and settling 'overseas'; to be a student is secondary" (Zha,1994). Like those who moved from the hinterland to the seat of empire in China's history, today's Chinese going abroad for studies do not just go there to gain skills and experience. They are making an often permanent move to the power centers in the world.

Third, as a community of student migrants, expatriate Chinese students have marginal social and cultural presence, which results from three factors. First, Chinese students overseas are inadequately and ineffectively organized. Though Chinese students in many foreign universities have established their own grass roots organizations, like the Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA), these units are usually weakly

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[1] Usually, embassies and consulates of Western countries in China issue student visas only to those applicants who have been offered scholarships or awards by foreign universities. It is quite rare and difficult for undergraduates to get financial aid.

structured with minimal impact on the Chinese students and limited ability to promote

their collective identity. Their services are largely confined to entertainment events, such

as organizing dance parties or showing films on weekends and important holidays.

Second, the community is largely ignored by mainstream media. As Riggins (1992:2)

points out, "the mainstream mass media have tended to ignore ethnic minorities or to

present them essentially in terms of the social problems they create for the majority."

Third, the students' efforts for external communication are often constrained by their lack

of fluency in languages of the host countries and unfavourable economic conditions.[1]

Consequently, Chinese students overseas are caught in cultural isolation, cut off from

their social surroundings. The social and cultural isolation motivates the students to

develop their own mass media to "quest for media space" (Riggins, 1992). This strong

desire is well expressed by Chinese students on an online magazine based in Holland

(Tulip, 1994):

> **Thousands of Chinese students have left their families to come to
> Holland to obtain knowledge. They are suffering from home sickness,
> language obstacles, clashes in different cultures and life styles, etc. It
> is, therefore, of practical significance and imperative to have a
> publication of our own to reflect our lives, what we see, think, and do
> so that all of us can feel the warmness of friendship, spiritual comfort,
> and the richness of life.**

2.3   Origin of Online Expatriate Student Magazines: Hasty but Natural

Online expatriate student magazines originated at the end of the 1980s and in the

early 1990s in North America. Though the idea was conceived abroad, the actual catalyst

for the birth of the media came from inside China. Around the mid-1980s, anti-

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[1] The unedited texts in Appendix 5 and Appendix 6 are two examples to show the students' skills of the
English language.

government student movements in China were quite active. Sporadic student

demonstrations were reported in many big cities. In 1989, the anti-government student

activities reached an unprecedented scale. Like those at home, Chinese students overseas

also kept a close eye on the development of the events and were searching for each and

every detail. To meet this need, on March 4, 1989, two Chinese students in Canada

proposed a plan for a communication network for Chinese students in Canada. In order to

evade the pressure of the Chinese consulates in Canada, they asked two Chinese students

in the United States for help. After less than two days of preparations, China News Digest

(CND), the first online expatriate student publication in the world, began on March 6 to

broadcast China-related news summaries from major foreign news agencies to about 400

readers in Canada (CND,1998).[1] This was the prelude to the rise of online expatriate

student media.

One may wonder why the first online expatriate publication took the form of a

digest in English. Here several factors seemed to have played roles. First, there was the

lack of manpower. It was obviously beyond the four students to do the coverage by

themselves. Second, even if they had attempted to broadcast their own news stories, they

did not have any first-hand information since they were far from the action in their home

country. Worse, they had no direct or reliable sources of information from China. As all

the news media in China are controlled by the Communist government, they produce

only one voice and one-sided stories. To follow the fast-changing situations inside China,

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[1] *China News Digest*, or CND, is an online information provider based in North America and run by
expatriate Chinese students and students-turned-professionals. The same name and abbreviation are also
applicable to the first online English digest magazine begun by the news service. To differentiate the news
organization from the magazine, in this paper I use CND without an underline to refer to the former, while
underlining it for the latter.

the students had no choice but to depend on foreign news media, which provided timely,

detailed and updated information. All they needed to do was to select what they needed.

The single purpose and topic in the early days of the publication facilitated such a process

of selection.

Though born out of haste, the publication was significant in two aspects. On the

one hand, it was a pioneering experiment for global mass communication within the

community of the Chinese students overseas. It both tested the effectiveness of the idea

of intra-community online media and provided online student media enthusiasts with

valuable experience. On the other hand, it also tested the acceptability of the new media

among the community members as a whole, laying the foundation for the emergence and

flourishing of later online magazines.

The first online weekly in Chinese in the world for Chinese students overseas

came out on April 5, 1991 in the United States.[1] Benefiting from the experience of CND,

the electronic Chinese weekly magazine, Hua Xia Wen Zhai (HXWZ), put out by the

creators of CND, looks more professional. Edited jointly by volunteer students in the

United States, Canada, and other countries, the weekly covers a wide range of topics and

has its regular columns. As well as translated news stories from foreign news media, it

also includes articles from Chinese newspapers and magazines, original contributions,

opinion articles, and entertainment materials. It is published every Friday and distributed

through the Internet to subscribers around the world. With a total of more than a million

Chinese characters of content a year,[2] and a continuous publication history, the magazine

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[1] In this case, the word "in" may sound misleading. What I really mean is that the magazine was produced
in the United States, but was published wherever in the world someone called it up on his or her screen.
[2] One Chinese character takes two ASCII codes.

is well established among the Chinese students overseas. Currently, <u>HXWZ</u> has more than 15,000 direct subscriptions via e-mail (CND,1998).

In January 1992, the world's second online expatriate student magazine started in the Canadian capital city of Ottawa. <u>Lian Yi Tong Xun</u> <u>(LYTX)</u>, literally meaning "News of the Association," was a comprehensive publication run by the city's Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA). It invited and published student-written literary works in an attempt to reflect the real lives of Chinese students living abroad. The magazine was an immediate success and gained worldwide popularity.

Following these two forerunners, online expatriate student magazines kept cropping up throughout the world. Similar publications appeared in the United States, Canada, Germany, Britain, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Japan, and other countries. It is impossible to tell exactly how many such magazines exist in the global community since there are no statistics regarding this total number. One reason is the fact that these magazines are in constant change. One appears today while another vanishes tomorrow. However, a rough examination shows that at least a dozen have been publishing regularly and are enjoying various degrees of readership and influence within the community.[1]

These online magazines can be divided roughly into three types: university and regional, national, and specialized. Generally speaking, university and regional magazines, such as America's <u>Wei Da Tong Xun</u> and Britain's <u>Leeds Tong Xun</u>, focus on reporting activities at universities, local CSSAs and nearby Chinese communities. National magazines go beyond a particular locality. They cover events that have an impact on the Chinese students across their country of residence. Successful examples

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[1] For an incomplete list of these magazines, please refer to *Sunrise Library* at http://www.sunrisesite.org

include Canada's <u>Feng Hua Yuan</u> (<u>FHY</u>) and Holland's <u>Tulip</u>. Specialized magazines, as the name indicates, target readers with special interests. There are pure literature magazines such as <u>Xin Yu Si</u> and <u>Wei Ming</u> and sports magazines such as <u>Soccer World</u>.

As the online expatriate student magazines rise in number, they are also improving in quality. One indicator is the fact that some of them have obtained their International Standard Book Numbers (ISBN). At the same time, they are gradually being accepted by outsiders. For instance, the U.S.-based Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), the largest online computer library network in the world, included <u>HXWZ</u> and <u>FHY</u> in its categories as serious cultural academic periodicals for the first time in 1995 (<u>FHY</u>,1995a).

It is important to note that the idea of online magazines is by no means an arbitrary decision made by a few people. It is born out of the various conditions of the community of the Chinese students abroad as a whole.

According to Reddick and King (1997:223), apart from global access and fast speed, online media are superior to traditional printed media. To become a print publisher not only requires a large sum of money, but is also a risky venture. It is especially a big challenge for small publishers, because printing is only a small part of the process of getting a published product to the market and the distribution systems are costly and intricate. However, the Internet has completely altered the publishing equation. The cost of establishing and maintaining online publishing can be very low. Even the smallest online publication can potentially reach the entire international online audience. This certainly is a piece of good news to those small communities that are financially disadvantaged but eager to promote their communication status and identity.

For these reasons, small communities, especially when the community members
are well educated and have easy access to the Internet, have shown a particular penchant
for online media.

In fact, while experimenting with online media, the Chinese students overseas
also tried traditional media. For instance, in 1994 the Federation of Chinese Students and
Scholars in Canada (FCSSC) published its own monthly newspaper, Feng Hua Bao or
Canada China News. But only a year later, the paper ceased publication due to "financial
difficulties" (FHY,1995b).[1] Through experience, Chinese students overseas have learned
that because of their unique characteristics and special social status, they cannot rely on
traditional communication media to reach and connect their scattered community
members. The new online media are the only way out.

2.4 Characteristics of Online Expatriate Magazines: What and Why

While the online expatriate student magazines are scattered across the world and
are published by individuals with different backgrounds, some common characteristics
can be identified.

Uneven development

Geographically speaking, they are unevenly developed. Chinese students overseas
are widely dispersed over the world, but their online media are mainly concentrated in
developed countries and regions, such as North America, Europe, Australia, and Japan.

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[1] The 16x11.5-inch tabloid was published in Chinese, English, and French with colour as well as black and white printing. Each issue had 16 to 24 pages and had a nationwide circulation of four to five thousand copies. See "Information Exchange," FHY, No. 5, November 20, 1993. http://ww w.fhy.net/On-line/1993-94/fhy05.html

Student media in other countries are either seldom seen or minimal in influence. Telling

evidence is found in the well-established Sunrise Library, a virtual Chinese library which

is supposed to include influential online student publications across the world. None of its

regularly archived expatriate student magazines is from the "Third World."[1]

Two reasons can be found in explaining the phenomenon. First, the globalization

of the Chinese students overseas is itself uneven. For most Chinese youth, the dream is

"Go to America! Go to America!" (Zha, 1994). Here, America first refers to a country, but

at the same time, it symbolizes a notion of developed countries. Consequently, there are

many more expatriate Chinese students in industrialized countries than in developing

ones. This imbalance means a greater potential for mass communication among the

students in developed countries and a larger critical mass of media enthusiasts and

opinion leaders to fuel media content. As a result, it is comparatively easy to initiate and

run mass media and to get support from readers.

Second, Chinese students in the developed countries enjoy technical advantages

over their counterparts in the less developed ones in their publishing practices. The

advanced telecommunications technologies, especially the popularity of the Internet and

easy access to it, provide those students in the West with a much better technological

infrastructure and more information channels. This, in return, greatly facilitates the

operation of student media in the developed world. Taking into consideration these

factors, one should not be surprised to see that online expatriate student magazines in the

world are dominated by those originating from the developed countries.

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[1] Based on my personal observation.

Identical formula

The geographical diversity of the expatriate Chinese students does not result in a diversified operation formula of their online magazines. On the contrary, it seems that all of the magazines conform to a similar model. First, all the magazines are non-profit. The editors and supporting staff are volunteers working for free. The contributions are free. The distribution is also free. This nature of the magazines has much to do with the unfavorable economic conditions of the Chinese students overseas.[1] At the same time, it is also closely related to the nature of the Internet as mainly a free source of information.

Second and related, the magazines are volunteer-based organizations. They are usually operated by students and students-turned-professionals who had no or limited experience in news media before they left China. Few journalism students are involved. In fact, neither journalism nor mass communication is a popular major among the Chinese students overseas due to slack market demand. Generally, each magazine has a loosely-organized editing board, which sets up vague and abstract guidelines for the publication.[2] These board members, often scattered across a country or countries, are responsible for routine work, such as selecting news, rewriting stories, collecting contributions, typing articles, distributing issues, and providing technical support. As older students graduate and new ones move in, there are frequent changes in the board

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[1] Almost no expatriate Chinese student has wealthy parents who can finance their child's overseas studies. Therefore, the students have to rely on themselves economically. Quite a number of them work off campus illegally for as little as three to five Canadian dollars per hour. For those who are lucky enough to get financial aid or be able to work part-time on campus, their income is barely enough to cover their basic needs. It is quite common for the students to live on around $250 Canadian a month. This amount must cover every expense ranging from rent and food to textbooks. It is no exaggeration to say that to the expatriate Chinese students, every cent counts.

[2] For instance, the goal of the online magazine of Chinese students in Germany is "to build a bridge of unity and friendship among Chinese students overseas, and to provide both domestic and foreign information." See "China-Deutschland Nachrichten," No. 1, October 1, 1994. http://cdn.unibw-hamburg.de

membership. In a sense, whether a magazine can succeed depends largely on the quality of the people on the editing board at any given time.

Third, the style and layout of the magazines are more or less the same. Generally speaking, a magazine's masthead comes right at the top. Typically, it contains such information as the title, publisher, issue number, and publishing time. Next is the news column. The number of news items varies from issue to issue, depending on whether it is an eventful time when the magazine is being edited. The body of the magazine is devoted to various columns. Interestingly, neither the columns nor the column titles is fixed. They change in correspondence with contents and editors. To some extent, this flexibility accommodates the instability of contributing sources and changes in editing staff. Entertainment materials are usually put at the end to offer a balance between serious and relaxing topics. Except for a few well-established publications such as HXWZ and FHY, which also publish Postscript [1] editions with images, technical and budget constraints mean the majority of the online student magazines are heavily text-oriented, with almost no graphics.

Because they target a relatively small, narrowly defined group of economically disadvantaged readers, most of the magazines lack attraction for commercial advertisers. Even those that do publish ads usually include no more than a couple each issue. The role of this sponsorship is also rather limited economically. My observation has found no obvious impact that the sponsors have on the operation of the magazines. In this aspect, the magazines run counter to the trends among some of their counterparts serving other

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[1] A page description language used in word processors and desktop publishing packages to layout pages to be printed. Pages may contain mixtures of text and graphics. For more information, see "Dictionary of Computing," 3rd edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 1990, p.350

ethnic minorities. For instance, many researchers have attributed the vigor of Latino

media in the United States during the 1980s to the discovery of the Spanish market (see

Berry,1987:53-56; Crister,1987:24-31). Business magnates both in the Latino community

and the mainstream society were willing to sponsor, establish, or buy the Spanish-

language media because they recognized the huge sums of money they could expect to

make from the investment (Downing,1992).

Many online expatriate student magazines claim that they do not accept money

from political organizations or governments. For instance, CND (1998) says that though

it welcomes donations and support from all sources, it does not accept unreasonable

strings being attached. It further illustrates its position by referring to an actual case.

> **We have received donations from a few sources for the 'Virtual Museum of Cultural Revolution'[1] project in the past few years. The only condition attached to the contributions, which we accepted, is that the money must be used on Cultural Revolution-related projects, such as obtaining, inputting, and maintaining the historical documents, articles, and photos for the electronic archive on our website. We would refuse the money if the donor had requested, for example, that we must include or exclude certain material for our collection. We would also refuse any money if the donor requested any favorable news coverage for any particular political organizations or governments.**

Nevertheless, due to lack of a monitoring mechanism, it is rather difficult to

verify such a claim.

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[1] The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) refers to a decade of political chaos in China initiated by Mao. The decade was tantamount to a civil war. The political movement and its aftermath are still in the memory of many Chinese today. How to view and report the Cultural Revolution is a politically sensitive topic in China's media. The government has repeatedly called on the Chinese people not to dwell on this disgrace of the Communist party and to "look ahead."

Wide range of coverage

The third characteristic of the online expatriate magazines is their wide range of coverage: literature, economics, politics, education, social affairs, science and technology, leisure topics... Two reasons may account for such diversity. First, the community of Chinese students overseas itself is highly diversified in education and personal background. Chinese students can be seen in almost every academic field. As a result, the magazines have to cover a wide range of topics to satisfy readers with different interests. Second, because of the diversified readership, the magazines correspondingly have a diversified force of contributors. Unlike commercial magazines, which usually have a big and stable pool of professional staff and freelance reporters, online student magazines mainly depend on contributors for whom writing is a hobby or a means to express themselves personally.

Enthusiasm in political topics

Another thing that makes the online expatriate Chinese student magazines different from many other ethnic magazines is their strong interest in political topics. When examining the ethnic magazine *Revista Mea* run by the Romanian community in Israel, Gabriel Bar-Haim (1992:205) finds that the publication has a visible lack of political position. Adopting a "quasi-noncontroversial, nonexplicit" position, it shuns politics and carries only escapist articles that suspend the pressure of daily life and touch a broad political consensus. The explanation for such a nonengaged position is that Romanians are disillusioned with various political parties and regimes, and that "they are working all week long and at the end of the week they prefer to relax and enjoy life." This gives an impression that only those who are not working all week long show interest

in politics. Obviously, this is not the case among the expatriate Chinese students. For the Chinese students, "difficulty and struggle are important aspects of the story" (Liu,1997:104). Apart from a tight study plan, "financial struggle is often seen as an immediate and enduring problem" (ibid.). To support themselves in an environment where help is almost nonexistent, most of the Chinese students have to work in one way or another in their spare time. They are usually exhausted at the weekend. No doubt they need as much relaxation as anyone else. But their interest in politics remains unabated.

This strong interest comes out of at least three kinds of impact: history, social environment, and personal education. Historically, China has been a country that has witnessed ubiquitous political conflicts at all levels. This was especially so in the Mao era when the country's population was repeatedly motivated to get themselves involved in political struggle. Consequently, the Chinese people have developed a keen enthusiasm in political activities. In a sense, they have had to do so, because many times their personal fates were and are determined by their performance in these political activities, such as on which side they stand in a political confrontation. As China gradually shifts its focus from class struggle to economic development in the post-Mao years, this tradition has lost some of its momentum, but is far from extinction. Born in such a country, the expatriate Chinese students cannot escape this historical tradition. In fact, many of the students themselves were participants of political movements before they left China.

The tradition is so powerful that they can hardly get rid of it even if they are in a foreign country. The socio-economic environment around them in the countries of their residence further fuels their interest of this kind. Their substantial and constant exposure to news media, the democratic social system, and the high degree of freedom of speech,

all work to promote their attention to political topics. This can be seen in the popularity

of forums in the magazines. Many magazines often have more than one forum in a single

issue.[1] In the forums, authors and readers express their personal opinions and argue with

one another. Their frankness is seldom seen in China's own news media.

Dual features of political positions

In contrast to the politically unengaged ethnic Romanian magazine in Israel that

Bar-Haim has examined, some ethnic media, like those of the Russian community in

Israel, do tend to be "militant" (Bar-Haim,1992:207). But the online expatriate Chinese

student magazines take neither of the extremes. Instead, they follow a middle road.

First, the magazines take a position of active engagement. They do take aim at

the problematic aspects in the Chinese society and do not avoid any sensitive political

topics in China: political reform, human rights, corrupt officials, family planning policies,

Three Gorges Dam construction, the Tibet issue, "6.4" student demonstration [2]

anniversary... The adoption of this engaged position is closely associated with the

students' own personal exposure to the democratic political and social systems in the

West. Before they left China, the students lived in a Communist dictatorship. All they

heard and read were censored stories from the government-controlled media. This social

situation prevented them from examining Chinese society critically. Now they are

situated in a completely different social surrounding that enables them to look at their

motherland from a different angle. Moreover, they have a reference point in their critique,

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[1] For example, the 410th issue of HXWZ, which was published on February 5, 1999, carried three forums
that dealt with China's education, population policy, and culture. FHY is another online magazine that
also frequently has more than one forum in a single issue.
[2] The military crackdown on the pro-democracy student demonstration in Tiananmen Square in Beijing on
June 4, 1989 -- the sixth month's fourth day (6.4).

namely Western values. They believe their political engagement will help China become powerful economically and democratic politically.

Second, their engaged positions never take a radical form. Unlike in some online expatriate Chinese dissident magazines, which blatantly claim to "comprehensively cover the news and comments about Chinese political dissidents," [1] extremism of any kind is something rare in the student magazines. Instead, they take a comparatively mild political attitude. They do not take a militant approach aimed to subvert or overthrow the Communist government back home. In a sense, they are more reformists, hoping their opinions can influence the Communist government to correct its mistakes by itself.

Nevertheless, it needs to be pointed out that this does not mean the magazines do not have their political preference. A researcher studies the history of Chinese journalism in the United States and Canada, and concludes that "publishing a Chinese newspaper has never been a lucrative business. Most organs were established to speak for the interests of specific groups or political factions" (Lai,1977:14). The online expatriate student magazines are no exception. Despite the fact that most of the magazines claim that "any views expressed in any forms in the magazine do not necessarily represent our stand," [2] their political stand is still subtly displayed through the selection of news, publishing of contributions, wording, etc. [3]

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[1] See the masthead of Xiao Can Kao (Little Chinese VIP). http://come.to/xck

[2] See August issue, 1998, of Viking Journal, an online Chinese magazine operated by Chinese students in Sweden. http://home1.swipnet.se/--w-14261

[3] For instance, in November, 1996, both HXWZ and FHY reported the petition of some of the expatriate Chinese students to the Chinese government for the release of Wang Dan, a leading student dissident detained in China. But China –Deutschland Nachrichten (CDN) (http://cdn.unibw-hamburg.de), an online magazine by Chinese students in Germany, ignored the petition to report China's decision to sentence Wang to 11 years of imprisonment. Meanwhile, Tulip (www.cybercomm.nl/-tulip2), an online Chinese student magazine in Holland, remained silent in both matters.

High percentage of digest and non-Chinese to Chinese translations

Online expatriate student magazines share a high percentage of digests and translations in their contents. A digest is a condensed summary of something original while a translation is a word-for-word version of something in another language. Digests come mainly in three forms: news, policies, and influential articles. Except for campus news, news items in the magazines are almost all taken from outside sources either in China or the host countries of the expatriate Chinese students. This feature is obvious not only in local and regional magazines, but also in national ones. This shows that the magazines lack news sources of their own due to difficulties in budget, staffing, time, and informants. Digests are also a popular form when it comes to introductions to some official policies and regulations.[1] Since topics of this kind are usually sensitive, a digest from the original seems to be the best way to show authoritativeness and prevent misunderstanding. From time to time, the magazines reprint articles that are believed to be representative, influential, informative, or controversial among the readers.[2]

Translations appear in the same categories as digests, yet it is ironic to note that translations are not entirely used to report foreign events. In many cases, they are also published for news from inside China. Supportive evidence is the common occurrence of

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[1] For instance, beginning from its 405th issue, HXWZ reprinted a series of six articles from China's official newspaper People's Daily (PD) about China's policies and regulations concerning taxation on foreigners and foreign enterprises in the country.

[2] A reprint of an article from a Chinese magazine can be found in HXWZ's Issues 405 and 406. The translated article, originally written by an American, is entitled "Water Shortage in China Will Shake Grain Security of the World." A digest article from a Chinese book called "What Knowledge Economy Really Is" appeared in the January 1999 issue of Northern Lights (NL), an online magazine by Chinese students in Sweden. These are only two of the many examples of the kind.

explanatory notes put after a translated name in Chinese to show the translator's

uncertainty about the correct Chinese characters for the name.[1] The kind of translation

usually reports events uncovered in Communist media back home.[2]

It is important to point out that the frequent use of digests and translations is a

common feature of ethnic magazines generally (see Bar-Haim,1992), reflecting the

constraints the magazines face. Nevertheless, digests and translations have practical

values to the expatriate Chinese students in particular. First, as a whole, the students feel

uncomfortable with the languages of their host countries. Translations can help them

bypass the language barriers in their efforts to understand the outside world. Second,

because the students are economically disadvantaged, they cannot afford a wide range of

Chinese and Western media. Digests and translations enable the students to get the news

that they want without buying the actual publications. Third, digests and translations can

save the students time to find desired yet widely scattered information.

Conclusion

Just as the experiences of expatriate ethnic groups share many similarities, their

ethnic media also have much in common. Riggins (1992) has commented on these

common traits. For the convenience of presentation, I summarize them into the following

list:

- Nonprofit
- Informal associations on a volunteer basis

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[1] A typical example reads like this in Chinese: "China's Department of Foreign Affairs has confirmed that two Chinese 'dissidents' with American permanent residence, Zhang Lin and Wei Quanbao (pronunciation-based translations) have been sentenced without a trial by the public security department to three years of forced labor reformation due to illegal entry and prostitution." See "News," No. 405, HXWZ.

[2] For instance. HXWZ reported in Issue 403 that more than 300 Xinjiang dissidents held their third congress in Turkey on December 14, 1998, and established a government in exile.

- Flexible roles and regulations
- A formal statement of organizational goals written in vague, idealistic terms
- Unstable and even short-lived
- Poor funding
- Small audience, low circulation, and poor distribution
- Not much appeal for advertisers since audiences are too small, too poor, or too scattered

Based on what has been covered previously, one may find that these common ethnic media characteristics coincide very well with those of the online expatriate Chinese student media. While they are different from the traditional ethnic media in that they are using a new medium, namely the Internet, their nature and role as media have remained unchanged. What has changed is only the form, and such a change is not insignificant. In fact, it has given the expatriate Chinese students an obvious advantage to achieve what conventional ethnic media could not do – to mobilize the widely scattered Chinese students overseas to build up a virtual community.

2.5   Discussion

While I have been examining the online expatriate student magazines, some questions kept cropping up in my mind. Among them are: Why are students from China particularly keen on running and using online media? Why are almost all the online magazines published in Chinese? Why do the online magazines have such a strong interest in China? In this section, I will try to explore the answers to these questions from my own point of view.

Why students from China?

The answer to this question may lie in a couple of factors. First, most of the Chinese students and scholars overseas, and students-turned-professionals, no matter how

long they are abroad, are still on the fringes of the mainstream culture in their new countries of residence. Consequently, they have "a sense of cultural loneliness" (Wu, 1997). This sense is further strengthened by their longing for their native land, hardships in studies, work, and daily lives, and clashes with cultures and ways of life foreign to them. They feel an urgent need for communication among themselves. Online magazines are one of the efforts they make in this direction.

Second, news media in China are mouthpieces of the Communist party. Communist propaganda is their primary task. Despite all the efforts made in the ongoing press reform, this role will remain unchanged as long as the Communist party is in power. As a result, news media in and from China, in whichever forms, cannot be counted up as trustworthy sources of information, especially China-related.

Third, despite the wide range of traditional Chinese media abroad, the great majority are run by people with strong Hong Kong and Taiwan backgrounds. Mainland students abroad find these publications "not to their taste" due to differences in political systems, ways of life, and languages. These mainland students are critical of the current system in China, but they have strong affection for their home country.

Fourth, the Chinese students abroad, as a whole, are geographically dispersed and financially disadvantaged. It is technically impossible and financially impractical for them to depend on traditional mass media for communication. Online media are just what they want: no high costs or time-space barriers, but effective communication with the ability to forge a virtual community.

Finally, as most of the Chinese students abroad are hi-tech majors and have free, easy access to cyberspace, they are more ready to accept the new media. On the other

hand, the large number of computer-related majors among the Chinese students overseas has provided the magazines with a stable lineup of qualified computer experts and guaranteed technical support.

Why in Chinese?

Chinese is very difficult to write, even more so on the keyboard. Despite numerous recent input innovations, the language is input on the keyboard mainly in two ways: character stroke-based or pronunciation-based. Unfortunately, neither of the two methods is easy to use. Typing in Chinese is both time-consuming and strenuous. It can hardly be imagined how much time and energy has to be devoted to typing more than a million Chinese characters in a year in order to run a Chinese magazine. Nevertheless, a great majority of the online Chinese student magazines abroad are published in the language. A ready explanation is that Chinese is the mother tongue of the students. This is the language with which they can best express themselves. Other people point to the students' limited communication skills in foreign languages. I agree both are factors, but they constitute only part of the answer. I argue that the most important part lies beyond the practical function of the language. It is in what is generally known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis that language is not merely a transparent means of delivering information or messages (Berger,1995:17). Berger points out:

> **The language conventions we learn as we grow up in particular families in specific strata of society in given countries affect us in profound ways. What we know of society and the world, and what we think about them, is tied to the language habits of the group in which we find ourselves. We are, after all, social animals, and our ideas are, to a considerable extent, related to our social and economic circumstances. (1995:18)**

Thus, it is obvious that the reason why the magazines are published in Chinese is not simply because the language is the mother tongue of their readers. More importantly, by using the language, the magazines are making use of a glue that binds all the community members through common experience, creating a familiar, comfortable social space amid alien surroundings.

Why a strong interest in China?

Several reasons can be cited as major contributors to the growing interest of the Chinese students overseas in their home country. First, China has become a new economic giant with a fast growth rate. In the five years before 1997, its annual growth rate averaged almost 12 per cent. World Bank statistics show that China's GDP in 1997 increased by 9.0 per cent, the highest in the world. Its 7.3 per cent per capita income increase rate was the second highest in the world (PD,1998a). At the same time, China is playing an increasing role in international affairs. Overall, China is becoming a focal point of world attention, not to mention of that of the Chinese students overseas.

Second, after years of economic reform, China's orthodox social systems have been greatly challenged. There are growing demands for political reform. As a result, China has reached a political crossroad. The overseas students are following with great interest what is going on inside China.

Third, the students overseas have family members back in China. As China is deepening its economic and political reforms, they are concerned about how their family members are affected.

Chapter 3 Building Up A Virtual Community:
Mobilizing Culture, National Identity, and Community Awareness

"People have many uses for the mass media and derive certain benefits or

'utilities' from them" (Berger,1995:29). The greatest benefit of the online media is not

that they facilitate communication among already connected individuals and groups, but

rather that they provide a medium for the formation and cultivation of new relationships

by providing virtually instantaneous access to thousands of potential contacts who share

similar interests and experience (McLaughlin,1995:91). As Rheingold (1993b:61) says,

individuals and groups find shared identities online through the aggregated networks of

relationships and commitments that make community possible. Needless to say, such new

relationships would be impossible without the new technological innovations. However,

new media technologies do not automatically create the conditions of community

(Watson,1997). They are only new tools for people to use. They should always be

supported by the efforts of those in the community.

In this respect, mass media play a significant role because of the so-called

"mobilization theory" in mass communication. This theory holds that if a large number of

people are exposed to the same mass media, they can be mobilized to foster certain

ideologies and beliefs (Berger,1995:124). Other researchers argue that the popularity of a

magazine comes from a correspondence between its contents and the collective identity

of its readership. Such a correspondence makes the readers receptive to accept familiar

cultural elements as well as elaborate on them (Bar-Haim,1992:197).

By examining some major categories of contents, this chapter examines how the online expatriate student magazines have tried to build up a virtual community among expatriate Chinese students. My observation and study have shown that the magazines have achieved this goal mainly by mobilizing three things among the students: culture, national identity, and community awareness. In doing so, the magazines create a centripetal force that binds the students together to form a virtual community.

3.1 Mobilizing Culture

Bar-Haim (1992:207) argues that there is a cultural continuity among a transplanted ethnic people before and after they leave their homeland. The scholar assumes most of the adult readers of ethnic magazines have been influenced by past events they experienced in their countries of origin. These events shaped their cultural interests, tastes, values, and worldview. When they leave their homeland, they carry many of these interests with them to the countries of their new residence. To attract readers, an ethnic magazine would invest much effort in identifying and articulating these elements of continuity. Here I need to point out that since the word "culture" is an umbrella term that covers a wide range of things, such a cultural continuity can be demonstrated at both the macro level, such as the tradition of a nation, and at micro level, as in a common lifestyle in a particular group. To promote such cultural continuity at both levels is exactly what the online expatriate student magazines do in their efforts to build up a virtual community. Specifically, efforts have been made in mobilizing common experience and the Chinese culture.

Common Experience

It is a common assumption that the more topics of interest two strangers share, the more easily they can communicate with each other, and the more possible it is they will be drawn closer. This so happens because the two strangers discover a common experience that serves as a basis on which they can build and further their relationship. The online expatriate student magazines attract together their globally distributed readers by offering them topics of common concern to talk about. Through these topics, the students find a connection to one another that they do not share with those immediately around them in their physical environments.

Such a common experience can be categorized into two major themes. First, there are articles in which the authors recall their past experiences back in China. Though the stories are individual accounts, they signify the allegiances that the students commonly encountered before their diasporic experience occurred. In most cases, the stories are about trivial things that happened to the authors when they were students in China. There are also occasions when the authors describe their non-school life at home.[1] But no matter what the topics are, they are closely associated with a general experience type common among the whole or part of the community. Usually these articles cover things that the authors no longer have now in their new surroundings. They describe the past

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[1] For instance, many magazines devoted their early issues to personal accounts by those former "educated youth" about their experiences in the countryside. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), numerous young students were sent by Mao to the countryside for "reeducation." Many of the generation, commonly called "educated youth," entered universities when China reestablished its national university entrance examination system in 1977. Quite a number of them went abroad for studies in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As they constituted a big portion of the overall expatriate Chinese students at that time, articles describing their harsh experiences in the countryside often appeared in the online student magazines. One example is the Japan-based "Zhu Bo Yuan" (ZBY), which published a serial titled "Stories of the Educated Youth" in quite a number of issues in 1996.

experiences with a reminiscent tone, suggesting a contrast between their youth and their

disadvantaged present.[1] These common characteristics are well demonstrated in the

following example, an excerpt from an article talking about how the author liked melon

seeds before she left China (Shang, 1997a):

> When I was in China, my favourite snack was melon seeds.
> Nutritious and fragrant, melon seeds were something that I could not
> do without. I would buy them whenever I went shopping, saw films,
> took trains or stayed alone. Melon seeds were always there no matter
> it was a holiday party or a wedding feast. Sitting around the table, we
> would talk and laugh while enjoying melon seeds. The atmosphere
> was so nice and imagination-inviting. Without melon seeds, the
> "taste" would be different.

> I still remember the Chinese Lunar New Year's Eve that I spent as a
> university student in China. As we did not go back home for the
> holidays, several classmates and I greeted the new year by eating
> melon seeds all night. The next morning, as we were about to fall
> asleep, someone knocked on our door. The visitor was one of our
> classmates who lived near the school. The classmate came to say
> "Happy New Year" to us "homeless." Before leaving, the classmate
> gave each of us a big bag of melon seeds. We enjoyed the seeds
> throughout the whole winter holidays.

> After I left China, my desire for melon seeds did not die. Instead, it
> became stronger and stronger with each passing day.

Trivial as it may seem to those outside of the community of expatriate students,

the article has a unique attraction to those in the community. The attraction lies in several

aspects of the common experience that the author and readers share. First, they share the

same education and social surroundings back home. They know what school life was like

there. Though the story is told by one student, since the experience grows out of a

common general environment, it sounds more like a story that anyone in the community

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[1] The "educated youth" suffered unimaginable hardships during Mao's "re-education campaign."
Nevertheless, along with the painful times they shared, they also shared comradeship. The nostalgia of
this generation is comparable to that of military veterans.

could tell. Second, they are talking about a shared pleasure. As such, melon seeds may

mean different things to different people. Many Chinese people like melon seeds, but

students in China have a special feeling for them because they are cheap and eating piles

of them together goes naturally with spirited conversations. Such a feeling can hardly be

understood by non-students. Third, by describing the visiting classmate's kindness, the

author displays the true and ubiquitous friendship around them back home, which the

expatriate Chinese students now usually lack and wish to have in their new life abroad. In

a sense, melon seeds here symbolize any common experience. In fact, it does not matter

very much whether the story is about melon seeds; what really matters is a topic that can

include everyone in the community, inciting the same nostalgia in each.

The theme of common experience is not only reflected in what the students did in

the past. Often it is illustrated by their present psychological connections to their

homeland. Articles of this type tend to resonate strongly among the students. The

following example shows from where such a power comes.

> **Everyone has his mother. Every mother has her stories. This year, my mom will celebrate her 70th birthday. Though over 70, she keeps fit and open-minded. I have five elder brothers and two elder sisters. Everyone in the family is preparing a gift for Mom's coming birthday. As a PhD, I am the one who has got the longest years of education in the family. I have a strong desire to write about my mom. I would like to use this article as my gift for my mom's birthday. (Chen, S.1995)**

The power of the article comes from the fact that the author touches another

theme of the common experience among the students overseas: love for family members

now far away. Due to visa problems, most of the expatriate Chinese students cannot go

back home during their studies abroad.[1] With each passing day, their love for their parents and family members grows. Such a feeling is not only felt among students, but throughout the whole community. As a result, any articles that touch the theme would remind anyone in the community of their own parents and family members. The strength of the theme lies in two aspects. First, such a theme is applicable to anyone in the community. It serves as a glue that can bind together any Chinese students abroad. Second, the glue will become only stronger as time passes and longing for loved ones far away deepens. In fact, the theme often extends beyond love for family members to include love for former teachers, neighbours, etc.

Chinese Culture

A culture displays itself in many ways, but the easiest way to promote a culture is to promote its tangible components, such as music, history, and language. These visible things are powerful because they make a particular culture stand out easily in a foreign environment. At the same time, they provide a group of people who have grown up in the particular culture with a sense of belonging. "These conduits of collective belonging aid in reconstructing identities and redefining agendas" (Bonus,1997:215). Therefore, to promote these visible cultural parts has always been one of the priorities in ethnic media (see Riggins,1992).

The online expatriate student magazines demonstrate this effort in three

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[1] Most of the Chinese students going abroad are issued only short-term visas (usually three to six months) before they first enter the countries of their present residence. Once they enter, their visas soon expire. After that, if they leave, they are not guaranteed to get another visa for re-entry. Therefore, most of the students would not take the risk of going back home to visit their parents and family members. It is something common that many expatriate Chinese students never see their parents or family members during all the years of their stay abroad.

categories. The first most frequent category is Chinese cuisine. Almost all the magazines have columns devoted to Chinese dishes. The necessity for Chinese cuisine articles among the Chinese students overseas stems from three factors. First, despite the proliferation of Chinese restaurants abroad, these dining places are usually out of the reach of the expatriate Chinese students because the majority of the students cannot afford to go there for dinners. Second, in order to go along with the tastes of their mainstream customers, Chinese restaurants abroad have westernized Chinese foods to various extents. As a result, quite a number of Chinese consider these dishes not true Chinese tastes. Third, expatriate Chinese students come from different parts of China. Consequently, they have different tastes in dishes and most of them cannot get the foods for their original regions of birth or residence in China after they go abroad.

Usually, each issue of the magazines introduces two or three dishes. The recipes are often supplied by the students themselves or reprinted from other Chinese publications. Most of the dishes introduced are typical of Chinese cuisine. For instance, quite a number of the magazines have introduced various ways to prepare soybean curd (tofu) dishes. Such an orientation is well justified in two aspects. First, Chinese cuisine is perhaps most representative of the traditional Chinese culture and has earned a worldwide reputation. Second, true Chinese food is something strongly missed by every Chinese student abroad, as shown below:

> **Ever since I left China to go abroad, almost every day I have been having onions, potatoes, and cabbages as well as meat that tastes like saw powder for my dinner. These things have spoiled my appetite. As time goes by, I have an increasing desire for soybean curd. Sometimes, I really think that I lack a certain "soybean curd element" in my body. (Shang,1997b)**

Also clearly shown in these cuisine articles is a strong sense of the authors' loyalty to the Chinese culture. As one author writes, "after I came to the United States, I have found that what I am most unaccustomed to is the American food. What I miss most is the dishes in my homeland" (LLS). On the surface, the students miss only Chinese cuisine, but in fact, what they really miss is the Chinese culture. By stimulating the "soybean curd" mentality of the students, the student magazines are actually mobilizing the cultural connection between the students and the Chinese culture.

The second most frequent category of Chinese culture that the online expatriate student magazines try to promote is Chinese customs. This trend is most obvious around traditional Chinese holidays. For instance, it has become a rule that before or after each Chinese Lunar New Year, the student magazines publish articles describing in great detail how the most important traditional Chinese holiday is celebrated in the authors' families or home regions. These customs are important to the students, because as the students stay abroad longer and longer, their home country becomes more and more distant in their mind. For many of them, it becomes an increasingly slim hope to go back home to spend a Spring Festival (Xiao,1998). Through the verbal repetition of these increasingly unfamiliar customs, the magazines help the students keep in mind a life that they once had:

> **In two more weeks, there will come our nation's biggest holiday – the Spring Festival. Those are the days when the adults find themselves busiest while the children happiest. It has left numerous unforgettable marks in our memories: fire crackers, New Year's Eve dinner, gift money for children ... Who can forget the sweetest dream in our childhood? (LYTX,1995)**

Moreover, through promoting the customs, the student magazines can mobilize the students' sense of pride in being part of the Chinese culture. One reader is puzzled by the fact that although many students-turned-professionals have upgraded their cars from a Camry to a Lexus, they are still not happy in the countries of their residence. The reader asks, "Why are we increasingly missing the Spring Festivals in the not so well-off past years?" (Nan,1999) Among other things, the reader concludes, "a Spring Festival outside China is tasteless." This shows that in the mind of the expatriate Chinese students, the Chinese culture is still superior to anything else. They are proud of having grown up in such a culture.

> **Though living abroad, we cannot forget that we are Chinese. Within us there are things that can never be or are hard to be changed, such as our racial characteristics, language, cultural customs, and lifestyle. All these things always remind us of the China where we were born and have grown up. (CSSB:1994a)**

Language is the third most frequent category in the effort of the online expatriate student magazines to bind the students by mobilizing Chinese culture. Many magazines have published articles showing the significance of the Chinese language to the expatriate students, such as in the following example:

> **Ten years ago, I was a hundred per cent Chinese language user. Now I have to live on English. I only use Chinese among close friends and Net friends. Nevertheless, my feeling for Chinese remains unabated. If I did not read or write any Chinese, I would feel somewhat unfulfilled in mind. To me, Chinese has become paramount to the scenery in my home town and the New Year's Eve dumplings. It is particularly dear to me. (Zhang, X.1999)**

There are also articles exploring the advantages and power of the Chinese language. In many cases, this is carried out with a comparison between Chinese and

foreign languages. For instance, in the following paragraphs, the author describes what he dubs the sinolization process of English:

> **Chinese depends on word order and functional words, such as prepositions and adverbs, to realize its grammatical functions. While other languages rely on "case" and word-ending changes to achieve the same goal. In this sense, there are only two languages in the world: Chinese and non-Chinese.**
>
> **Starting from the Middle English period (AD 1100 to AD 1450), English entered its sinolization process. The English grammar resembled very much the Chinese grammar. This sinolization process further expanded to pronunciation during the Early English period (AD 1400 to AD 1600). The major manifestation was that the ending "e" was no longer pronounced...**
>
> **For whatever reasons, the sinolization process of English is a historical fact...**
>
> **It is a pity that the prime time of the Tang dynasty (AD 618 to AD 907) was not long enough. Otherwise, English would have been further sinolized.** (Zhu, 1999)

Articles of this kind come out of a psychological need of the expatriate Chinese students. The students use these articles to assert cultural confidence and offset their localized inferiority abroad, especially when they are forced to use a language unfamiliar to them and are feeling economically disadvantaged. Reading this article, any Chinese student abroad can get a sense of superiority for using the Chinese language, because the article maintains that the language they were born with is one that evolved fully far earlier than did English. Sharing this language makes the students feel a proud bond to one another.

3.2   Mobilizing National Identity

"Identity is a mutable, essential idea held in common, signified by agreement" (Belden,1997:6), and it is significant because it is always associated with power (Zou & Trueba,1998). While the formation of ethnic identity is contributed by many factors, nationality is no doubt one of the most salient elements. It is also an easier identifier of ethnic identity. In the context of Chinese nationality, it is true that there are micro levels of ethnic identity and Chinese people are grouped according to their regions of birth or residence, local languages, and subcultures. But at the macro level there does exist a shared overall mainland Chinese ethnic identity of common experience during the long periods of turmoil and imperial rule as well as in the People's Republic. In fact, it is during the Communist rule that Mandarin became the standard national language in the People's Republic.

In a traditional spatially organized multi-ethnic community, people set up their enclaves in metropolitan areas largely based on their nationality. One obvious example is the ubiquitous "Chinatowns" across the world. These ethnic enclaves were important because they bound otherwise unattached individuals together within a joint national identity. This national identity gave the residents of the enclaves the power to protect themselves against externally imposed disadvantages.

The virtual space on the Internet is almost always organized like these ethnic neighborhoods (Mitra,1997:62), with people of a shared nationality inhabiting their own particular space. Therefore, as in a traditional real world ethnic community, national identity also plays a significant role in a virtual community, as in that of the Chinese students abroad. Nevertheless, as the students linger abroad, the image of their homeland

becomes more and more blurred with each passing day. To refresh their sense of national identity, something must be constantly done. Because of their nature of being mass media and their ability to overcome time and space barriers, online expatriate student magazines have special power in this respect.

Roughly speaking, three tactics have been adopted by the magazines to mobilize the national identity of the students. First, the magazines have done everything they can to expose the students to the "voice" from their homeland. Inside this category, at least three themes can be identified. The first theme is to bridge the students with their homeland by providing them with information from and about it specifically related to them. For example, Zhu Bo Yuan (ZBY), an online magazine run by Chinese students in Japan, publishes an article explaining how to listen to radio broadcasts from China (Ji,1998). The article lists the broadcasting stations in China that run shortwave programs which can be heard around Tokyo. It also gives the broadcasting times and the frequencies. The second theme with the "voice" tactic is to report on China's latest achievements in science and technology. For instance, LYTX set up regular columns to report "messages from China." One of the messages claimed that China had successfully developed 64-bit supermicro computers, then one of the most advanced computer systems in the world (Wang, C.1996). The usual undertone of these messages is that China is catching up or taking the lead in a particular field. Articles like these serve to boost readers' sense of pride in being Chinese at a time when their self esteem may be strained by being economically poor and marginalized in a wealthy, heavily modernized foreign environment. The third "voice" theme is postings that call on the expatriate students for direct contributions to their homeland. Within this theme, the most frequent

three topics are calling for research papers, inviting the students to go back to China to

attend academic conferences, and soliciting students abroad to work in China.

The second tactic that the magazines use to mobilize national identity is to

directly initiate or sponsor programs that encourage the students to do something to help

China. These programs intend to get as many expatriate students involved as possible. In

many cases, they come into being out of gratitude to China. One example is the "Chinese

Children Project" initiated and sponsored by FHY in 1996. According to the magazine,

the project was to help speed up China's modernization by aiding the education of

Chinese children:

> On April 5, 1996, a body jointly composed of 40 initiators and nine online Chinese magazines proposed to "donate a set of serial books for the young in the motherland." They have temporarily named the proposed scientific knowledge-promoting set of serials as "Mystery." As it targets at children in China, the project is named "Chinese Children Project."
>
> According to Mr. Tu Ya, one of the initiators, the purpose of the "Mystery" serials is to help speed up China's modernization process by providing the children with a series of books that are rich in contents and attractive in readability. Having benefited from the education provided to us by our motherland, we can and should spend some of our spare time writing a couple of short essays on topics that we are familiar with. (FHY, 1996)

Nationalism is the third tactic used by the student magazines and is particularly

highlighted when clashes occur between China and other countries. On those occasions,

the magazines stress the unfairness and threats that the foreign nations have imposed on

China. They publicize the message that Chinese interests are being infringed upon and it

is the responsibility of every Chinese to side with their motherland in the conflicts.

Despite their differences in political positions, all the online expatriate student magazines

unite unanimously under the banner of nationalism. This tactic never fails among the students, because as a line of a song popular among Chinese abroad goes, "We own a common name called China" (Tong, 1996).

While this tactic has been applied to many Sino-foreign clashes,[1] Japan has been the major target because of the hostilities between the two countries that spanned most of this and last century. For instance, in July 1996 when the long-standing Sino-Japanese dispute over sovereignty of the Diao Yu Tai Islands [2] exalted as a group of Japanese extremists erected a lighthouse on one of the islands, the student magazines reacted swiftly and concertedly with a series of articles criticizing the Japanese act. Among other things, FHY, together with Federation of Chinese Students and Professionals Canada (FCSPC), sponsored a demonstration in front of the Japanese embassy in Ottawa and consulates in Toronto and Montreal. The FHY and LYTX simultaneously published a FCSPC appeal to Chinese students worldwide for petition signatures:

> **Having long reflected on the fact that the generosity of the Chinese government and people in treating the Japanese people with good for their evils and that the good will of the Chinese government and people for no more wars between the two countries has been repeatedly made use of by the Japanese revived militarists, we can no longer remain silent. We would utter our roars in defence of Diao Yu Tai and keep the holy territory of our motherland from being infringed on ...**
>
> **Chinese scholar and student friends in Canada, please sign your names!**
>
> **Readers of FHY across the world, please sign your names!**

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[1] For example, Red River Valley (RRV), a Canada-based online expatriate student magazines, readily reprinted in its Issue 12 of August 1995 a strong-worded People's Daily (PD)article criticizing the claim made by a Time magazine contributor on July 31 that the United States should curb China's growing political and economic strength.

[2] Known in Japan as the Senkakus, these islands are an uninhabited East China Sea island chain claimed by Tokyo, Beijing, and Taipei.

> **Our signatures will form waves and seas against invasion and in favour of peace. (FHY, 1996 and LYTX, 1996a)** [1]

Two weeks later, FHY established its Diao Yu Tai Web page where readers were encouraged to hold discussions, make suggestions, and offer information about how expatriate Chinese students reacted in the rest of the world. The appeal received a warm response from Chinese overseas all over the world. Readers from the United States, Australia, Britain, Finland, Canada and other countries wrote supportive letters to FHY. Among them was an octogenarian reader from Berkley, California, who wrote:

> **A war might soon start. Many people may not be willing to hear the word. But, a war does not occur when you are willing to have it. Should we fail again in the new Jia Wu War,** [2] **we will lose the probably only basis of the future of the Chinese people. The Chinese nation will gradually disappear in the next century. This is a reality. Do we have other options? No!**
>
> **Quite early on, the Japanese started to invade China. This time they want to take away the sea that will sustain our future lives. What we only can do is to fight back firmly.**
>
> **For our lives, for our respect, and for the Chinese blood in your body, let's act now! (LYTX, 1996b)**

A more recent application of the nationalism tactic of mobilization was seen in late 1998 and early 1999 when the Japanese government once again denied its historical aggression against China. In response, FHY published several articles about the topic. In Issue 192 on February 20, 1999 the magazine established a supplementary section to allow the readers to argue things such as "Is Japan China's Enemy?" and "Can Chinese Troops Defeat The Japanese?" A majority of the 12 articles sided with China and were

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[1] For a more detailed translation, see Appendix 2.

[2] This refers to the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 launched by Japan to annex Korea and invade China.

critical of two readers who thought differently. One article even implied that those who spoke for the Japanese were not patriotic.

3.3   Mobilizing Community Awareness

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the expatriate Chinese students, as a whole, are loosely structured due to lack of organization. Consequently, they have a very vague awareness of the community they compose. In most cases, when something adverse happens, they rely on individual power rather than community influence. One of the priorities of the student magazines is to cultivate and stimulate a community awareness among these students. In this effort, the magazines strive to send out a clear message to the students: A community is always more powerful than an individual. Analysing the articles in the magazines, one may find that three themes are focused on: communication among the widely scattered community members, the "big family" concept, and the defence of community interests.

The first theme is bridging the geographically scattered students in the community. This theme most often comes in the form of intra-community services. The magazines try to provide the students with services that can promote communication among them. Three features are typical in this aspect. One is the "looking for" messages in which one student tries to find someone he or she has known before but has lost contact with due to geographical movement. The announcers of these messages expect their lost friends also to be members of the community. They and the magazines assume most Chinese students abroad would read their publications and chance upon these

messages and re-establish contacts with their former classmates or colleagues. The following is typical:

> **Li Zhan Qing is looking for high school classmate Chi Peng. Thank you.**
> **Contacting address:** lizq@bayou.uh.edu (<u>ZBY</u>:1998)

This use of online media is also quite common in other expatriate ethnic communities, such as the Indian community (see Mitra,1997). One researcher points out that the significance of the phenomenon is beyond just looking for a lost friend. "These are the past identities that are brought to the network which help the users find their network identity by seeking the congruences that existed prior to entry into the virtual space" (Mitra,1997:63). Finding or even attempting to find one's former community through this channel helps to foster a community awareness among users.

The second feature in this "bridging" aspect is what I call the "online matchmaking" phenomenon. Due to long years of studies, a big portion of the Chinese students abroad have missed their prime time for falling in love and marriage. Cultural differences and disadvantaged economic situations have inhibited many students from establishing relationships with local members of the opposite sex in the countries of their residence and developing these relationships into love. On the other hand, the traditional Confucian idea that both parties in a marriage should be matched in terms of family and personal backgrounds is still quite popular in China and among the students. Consequently, they turn their eyes to other expatriate students of their own kind. "Cyberfriends" is a regular online matchmaking column in <u>FHY</u>. In each issue, the magazine publishes a dozen "seeking spouse" messages for both male and female students. As soon as the column came out, it became instantly popular among the

students. Now, not only is the list in FHY growing. other online expatriate student media

are following suit and getting an enthusiastic response from readers.[1] The followings are

two examples from FHY (1999):

> **99038**
> **Male, 24 years old, expatriate Chinese student from Fiji. Currently studying in Australia for a degree in computer engineering, handsome, well-built and outgoing. Looking for a female partner in Australia. If you are interested, please contact me via this email address: d9734612@mail.connect.usq.edu.au**
>
> **99039**
> **A well-qualified Chinese female, born in 1967, 1.63m, now studying and living in Sweden. Very nice personality, beautiful, kind, tender, warm-hearted, open-minded and with (good) hobbies. Looking for a gentleman who is kind and responsible and has settled down in North America or Europe, better under 45 years old. Please contact me via fhy-service@www2.fhy.net.**

An interesting detail in the above messages is that neither of the posters is living

in Canada, where FHY is published. This shows the wide popularity of the magazine

among Chinese students around the world. Moreover, it exemplifies the effectiveness of

the online media in attracting scattered community members together.

The third feature of the "bridging" theme is the postings in the magazines that

announce community events. As there is a general assumption that most of the students

are reading the magazines, organizations for students or students-turned professionals

make use of the far-reaching influence of the publications. Whenever they hold events,

they place announcements in the online media. This in turn helps the magazines promote

community awareness among the students, because if they do not read the postings in the

magazines, they will lose something. The next posting appears in a Netherlands-based

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[1] Now, HXWZ and the Montreal-based *Sunrise Library* are offering the same service in their publications. Readers' response is quite impressive.

student magazine. It announces the initial committee meeting of the Engineer Association of the Chinese Professionals in Holland:

> **To initiate the association and enable our members to have a better understanding of the organization and get an active involvement in its activities, we here invite all the members and those interested to attend our first meeting. (Tulip, 1997)**

It is also interesting to note how the expatriate Chinese students understand the localization and globalization of online media when they make use of these magazines. Online media are borderless and accessible simultaneously across the world, but the expatriate Chinese students consciously or unconsciously still have geographic preference for the magazines. They may use a magazine that targets a global audience even when they wish to reach peers living in their local community. That explains why a student in Australia seeking a sweetheart may place an ad in a Canadian online magazine.

The second theme in the magazines' efforts to mobilize community awareness is to promote the idea that if one member in the community runs into difficulty, the rest are ready to offer help. The theme aims to create among the students a feeling that the community is like a big family for every student, since practically every student is far away from his or her own real extended family. The magazines suggest they can always expect aid in hard times by turning to the virtual community. To build up such a big-family idea, the magazines make a point of publicizing the "help" stories. One of the many examples took place in mid-1993 when a <u>LYTX</u> article reported how the FCSPC in Ottawa organized a film show to raise money to help the family of a local expatriate Chinese student who died during his studies abroad:

> On March 27 of this year, to provide economic aid to the wife and daughter of the (deceased) Chinese student Wei Jiansu, the federation sponsored a film show to seek donation. Many of us Chinese students were so generous that they donated 1,800 Canadian dollars. This money not only helped Mrs. Wei overcome her difficulties temporarily, but at the same time embodied the warmth of the big family of the federation. It is our very goal that when one has difficulty, all of the rest come to aid. (Xue.1993)

The big family idea was further publicized when the magazine published the letter of thanks from Mrs. Wei in the same issue:

> I know that it is not easy for us Chinese (students) to live overseas. Due to tight study and work schedules, we seldom have a chance to get together in a year. But, when I ran into difficulties in my life, both known and unknown friends offered me such a generous financial aid and emotional comfort. These visible and invisible things indeed make me feel the kindness of those of the same origin as mine. I find it really warm to live in such a big family. (Li, Q.1993)

The third theme most frequent in the community building is the defence of the interests of the community. Whenever the interests of the expatriate Chinese students are threatened, the magazines publish articles to defend the students. By publicizing events that are against the common interests of the community, the magazines are focusing the students and serving as the mouthpiece of the whole community. Consequently, they mobilize community awareness among the students. For instance, in late 1994 when Canadian governments were considering doubling the tuition fees for international students, Red River Valley (RRV), an online student magazine at University of Manitoba, published the news and the concern of the Chinese student community (RRV,1994).

This role of the magazines in promoting community awareness is more obvious when the interests of the expatriate Chinese students in particular are sabotaged. On

September 5. 1995, The Globe and Mail published a column claiming that in order to

build a network of espionage, China was making use of its students in Canada by forcing

them to apply for permanent residence in Canada to become "fish sunk at the bottom."

The article also stated that these fish would bring in more fish to Canada. The article

called on Canadians to be on their guard against the threat from these Chinese spies. The

expatriate Chinese students were widely and greatly angered by these claims. LYTX

(Huang,1995a) and FHY (ibid.) both reported the incident in the same month. On behalf

of the students, FHY's editor-in-chief wrote a letter to the Globe in strong protest.

This championing role is seen not only when the magazines are reactively

defending the students' interests. It is also visible when these online media strive to

actively promote the interest of the whole community. A telling example is LYTX's

promotion of the participation of the "new immigrants"[1] in the election of Chinese

community leaders in Ottawa:

> **With the growing ratio of us new immigrants in the local Chinese community, we need a number of representatives to participate in the community work and to raise our status in the Chinese community and the Canadian society. We hope that we are united in the elections of the Chinese Association and the Chinese Mansion to fully voice our demands. We also hope that through our active involvement, we can build a harmonious understanding with the rest of the community.**
>
> **Our running platform is:**
> **1. To raise the status of the Chinese in Canadian society;**
> **2. To enhance unity and cooperation in the Chinese community;**
> **3. To spread the Chinese culture and promote community service;**

---

[1] Refers to the mainland Chinese immigrating to Canada in the 1980s and 1990s. Most of them are students-turned-professionals. To differentiate them from the labor-oriented Chinese immigrants in earlier history, this group of knowledge-oriented people are called "new immigrants." Traditionally, the Chinese community in Ottawa was dominated by those who came before the "new immigrants," especially those from Taiwan and Hong Kong. Relationships among the three factions in the Chinese community are quite subtle due to the different social systems and values that they inherited before their immigration.

4. **To stimulate the communicative channels between the new immigrants and the rest of the community, and to reflect the newcomers' interests and demands.** [1] (Chao.1995)

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored how the online expatriate student magazines have helped to create a virtual community among the Chinese students abroad by mobilizing culture, national identity, and community awareness. One may think that this use of the online media is a new phenomenon. In fact, this is not the case. Online media are not the first method developed and used by people of Chinese origin and other ethnic groups to communicate with, organize with, and support one another. They have just provided a new tool for them to do so.

Printed media have long been used by expatriate Chinese to mobilize their community. In fact, in many cases, the birth of the expatriate Chinese presses was politically motivated. For instance, early Chinese media in Canada were born out of pure politics. After the Hundred Day's Reform[2] failed in 1898, many supporters of the Reform Movement fled China. In 1899, Kang Youwei, the Reform Movement leader, founded the China Reform Association in Victoria, B.C., and it soon established or took over newspapers in major Chinatowns in North America to advocate its political program and win supporters among expatriate Chinese. Among others was the <u>Chinese Reform Gazette</u> in Vancouver (Lai,1977:6). The early 1900s saw battles of ideas among various

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[1] All the candidates were elected in the election. For more information, read "Chinese Students and Scholars Are Gradually Merging into the Canadian Society" by Zheng Huang. No. 67. September 1, 1995, <u>FHY</u>. http://www.fhy.net

[2] A roughly 100-day-long failed political movement mainly by intellectuals calling on the Qing Dynasty to undertake reforms.

political forces to win the hearts of their fellow countrymen (Lai,1977:7). Consequently, newspapers were preoccupied in presenting their views on political, social or economic questions in an attempt to mould the Chinese community in Canada into their respective shapes.

This use of the mass media remains popular in the expatriate Chinese community in the second half of this century. For example, the ruling Nationalist Party or Kuomingtang in Taiwan established party organs in most key Chinese communities in Canada, such as the New Republic in Vancouver and the Shing Wah Daily News in Toronto. News media with Hong Kong backgrounds, like Ming Pao Daily News and Sing Tao Jih Pao, publish their Canadian issues to influence the growing number of immigrants to Canada from Hong Kong. As a result of the recent influx of mainland immigrants, the Communist news media in China have also started to appear in Canada. The Communist mouthpiece People's Daily prints and distributes its overseas edition in Toronto.

Other ethnic groups have also long been using the mass media to form their identities abroad. For instance, the Filipino Americans in southern California have used their ubiquitous community presses as a communication system within their society and between it and the mainstream. The Filipinos use their community newspapers to connect with each other and to foster the collective sense-making over their conditions and experiences in their "new home." By providing their readers newspapers "of their own," the Filipino American community media "operate as alternative spaces for Filipino-Americans who see themselves as active agents in the remembering, reconstruction, and representation of their collective identities" (Bonus,1997:209).

Nevertheless, online media, as a new tool, do have their unique power in modifying social interaction patterns and bridging the gaps between community members. According to Schmitz (1997:84-85), this power can be seen in two ways. First, online media are suitable to cross spatial, temporal, perceptual, or psychological boundaries that separate persons and groups. As a result, they reduce the cultural and socio-economic distances within a community. This is well demonstrated in the online expatriate Chinese student magazines. In these publications, it is a common occurrence that the contributors and readers come from countries of residence that can be thousands of kilometres apart, yet they feel as close as next door neighbours. Online technology has provided the basis for such a structural change of the physical nature of the community. Consequently, the online magazines can reach and influence a geographically unconstrained community and readership. As seen in the following excerpt from Xi Xian (XX), an online student magazine in Germany, even a small magazine that is located in a small town can influence a large group:

> A big event in this issue is the "Mystery Project."[1] Xi Xian is very glad to have the opportunity to participate in such a meaningful event to do something for the children in our motherland.
>
> As we are far away in a small German town, we have a very limited role and involvement in the event. Nor can we do much to help with such organizational work as publishing and fund-raising. But we would like to make use of the Internet to link you, our dear readers, to the editors of the serials so that we can make our contribution to the publication of a good serial for our children. (XX, 1996)

The power of the online media can also be seen in their freedom from face-to-face communication. Some researchers have argued that online media are superior to the

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[1] Also called "Chinese Children Project" in FHY. See page 62.

traditional face-to-face interaction, because they have a "cues filtered out" aspect (Culnan and Markus,1987). To communicate online, people do not need to face each other. "The absence of face-to-face cues restricts information that might prejudice us and thus facilitates interaction across greater socio-economic differences" (Schmitz,1997:85). Because of this key feature, Chinese students abroad can "think what we want to think, say what we want to say, and write what we want to write" (XX,1995b) in their online magazines without worrying about the various differences in political attitude, regional origin, educational background, etc., existing among the community members.

Fundamentally speaking, the success of the online expatriate student magazines does not lie in the single fact that they use a new media tool. Rather, it comes from their ability to orient the media more incisively and immediately to the community.

Note

As I was finalizing this paper, the incident of NATO's bombing of China's embassy in Belgrade took place on May 7, 1999. I have observed that the same magazines as I have described and discussed earlier in this chapter have made a quick response to the event and are exploiting this incident to mobilize national identity among expatriate Chinese students. All the magazines have had full coverage of the event. Some established and influential ones, like HXWZ and FHY, have published special editions to inform their readers of the latest developments and provide them with a way to vent their opinions on the bombing. During the climactic days of the incident, HXWZ came out with special supplements. While opinion articles with different views are also seen, an overwhelming majority of the articles in the magazines on the incident have advocated

strong Chinese nationalism and anti-NATO and anti-American feelings with slogans such as "Blood must atone for blood" and "Americans go back home." The behaviour of the online expatriate student magazines supports my description and conclusion in this chapter about the magazines' interest in mobilizing Chinese nationalism among the expatriate Chinese students in their efforts to build up a virtual community.

For a sample table of contents of a magazine's special edition during this period, refer to Appendix 3.

Chapter 4 Evolution and Development: Four Models

It has been 11 years since the birth of the first online expatriate student media service "China News Digest" in 1989. During these years, many similar magazines have cropped up across the world. Some have survived and flourished to enjoy popularity and influence in the global community of the Chinese students abroad. Others have vanished as quickly as they were produced. Still others are barely keeping themselves alive. This chapter looks back to examine how these publications have evolved and developed. My study finds that though these magazines are operated by different groups of students or students-turned-professionals in different countries, roughly speaking, they follow four models of development: the CND model, the Buffalonians model, the Leeds model, and the FHY model.

4.1 CND Model

China News Digest (CND) is "a volunteer news organization operating on the Internet to disseminate news about China" (Xiong, 1998). Its purpose is to: 1) disseminate timely news and information related to China or other information considered to be of special interest to its readers; 2) serve the Chinese community overseas, and 3) promote Chinese culture and Chinese computing (CND, 1998). It started its operation on March 6, 1989, with an English news digest of the same name distributed to its initial 400 readers. Through 11 years of development, CND has expanded to become a news organization that publishes five English newsletters and one comprehensive Chinese weekly

magazine, <u>HXWZ</u>. It claims to now be serving an estimated readership of 150,000 around

the world (ibid.) and is widely considered as one of the most successful online expatriate

student news providers. A careful scrutiny of the news service notes three major

characteristics in this model of development: independence, wide scope of operation, and

professionalism.

Independence

A rare exception among the online expatriate student media, CND has been an

independent news organization since its first day of operation. This means two things:

non-affiliation and independent operation.

In structure, CND is not affiliated to any student or non-student organizations. It

is a free news service established purely by independent individuals without any political

or organizational backgrounds. Throughout the years, it has mainly relied on individual

contributions for development. CND was founded by four Chinese students, two in

Canada and two in the United States. One of the four students was responsible for

writing, the second for editing, the third for distribution, and the final one maintained the

distribution list. Ever since then, CND's development has been dependent on private

contributions. For instance, in the summer of 1989, the head of a closing electronic

newsletter for expatriate Chinese students handed over his list of readers to CND.

Meanwhile, two other Chinese students operating their own news service to expatriate

Chinese students joined CND with their existing listserver account at Arizona State

University. These two additions greatly improved CND's broadcasting power and

readership (CND,1998) in its early days of development. This role of private contributors

remains vital to CND today. Currently, 45 volunteers are involved in its daily operation.

They come from Australia, Europe, Japan, Hong Kong, mainland China, Canada, and the

United States. These people join out of their own free will to make CND's free services

possible to its readers because, as one CND executive puts it, "we share the same vision:

a prosperous and democratic China, where access to information is a right – not a

privilege" (Wen,1996).

As a result of its non-affiliation nature, CND enjoys independent operation. It

does not need to reflect the opinions of any particular organizations, nor does it have to

carry out any propaganda tasks assigned to it by its controlling boss. Consequently, it can

let any views be heard in its publications, and takes pride that "CND reports all issues

related to China, political, economic or cultural, and does not take side on those issues"

(CND,1998). In fact, quite a number of the topics in its publications sound rather harsh to

many Chinese. A recent example is CND's focus on the politically sensitive topic of the

10th anniversary of the "6.4" Tiananmen Square Incident. HXWZ is even publishing a

series of special issues in memory of the historic event, including a collection of official

documents, speeches and statements by student protesters and other unofficial

commentators, as well as witness reports which contradict official version of what

happened in Tiananmen Square[1]. This is unimaginable for those student media that have

close ties with pro-Communist organizations. For this reason, CND is under close watch

by the Communist government inside China (Wen,1992). Nevertheless, it is this style of

independent operation that frees CND from the constraints that many other online

expatriate student magazines have to consider in their operation. As a result, it attracts a

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[1] For details, see HXWZ Supplement Issues ZK#166, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173 and 176.

wide range of readers, both supporters and critics, and the news service itself is put in the spotlight. To a great extent, the development of CND owes much to such conspicuousness, especially in its early days.

Wide scope of operation

Unlike the majority of the online expatriate student magazines that concentrate only on a single publication, usually a Chinese magazine. CND has never spared its efforts to expand its free online services, both in English and Chinese. Shortly after the birth of its first publication, CND decided in the summer of 1989 that regional services would be opened to provide readers with more local news. As a result, two English biweeklies came into being. While *CND-US* focuses on news concerning the Chinese community in the United States, *CND-Canada* targets its counterpart in Canada. On March 18, 1990, CND saw its services further expanded beyond North America with *CND-EP* -- a biweekly to report news regarding the Chinese communities in Europe and the Pacific region. In August 1993, CND sponsored the China Internet Letter (CINET-L), a forum for computer professionals inside China to exchange information with their counterparts abroad. On April 5, 1991, CND added to its list of service its first Chinese magazine Hua Xia Wen Zhai (HXWZ). The new magazine quickly attracted many CND readers. To some people, its popularity even outshines that of CND itself.[1] In summary, CND currently publishes the following online periodicals:

- *CND-Global*: general news about China for global readership; published three times a week;
- *CND-US*: a biweekly for news concerning Chinese community in the United States;
- *CND-Canada*: a biweekly to publish news about Chinese community in Canada;

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[1] Based on personal observation.

- *CND-EP*: a biweekly to report news regarding Chinese community in Europe and the Pacific region;
- *CINET NL*: a monthly newsletter for China's Internet Technical Forum
- <u>*HXWZ*</u>: a weekly comprehensive magazine in Chinese

CND's wide scope of operation is not limited to its formal publications. It is also actively involved in providing other services. In February 1993, CND formed a working group to develop and maintain an electronic information database for public access through the international network. The database, called "CND-IB," enables the public to retrieve from it a large amount of China-related information that is considered to have historical significance, such as documentation of Japanese atrocities in China in the Second World War, accounts and photographs of the Democracy Movement of 1989, and the military crackdown that ended it.

Meanwhile, special homepages have been added during the years to the CND Web site.[1] From time to time, CND puts special columns on the web site to meet its readers' special needs.[2] When issues concerning its readers occur, CND makes special news broadcasts on the site.[3] Such a wide scope of operation is hardly seen in any other online expatriate student media. It enables CND to orient its services to readers at different levels in different geographical locations. It also demonstrates the ease with which CND develops itself.

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[1] An incomplete list includes: Land of Beauty; China Scenery Pictures; Chinese Classics; Chinese Calendars; Job Bulletin for Chinese Students and Scholars; Directory of Chinese Students and Professionals Organizations; June 4th Victims Memorial; and Matchmaking Service.

[2] Such as Books and Journals Review, Q & A, Market Watch, and Sports Highlights.

[3] Such as during the Olympic Games or the Most Favored Nation trade status debate between the United States and China, and when issues arise concerning the permanent resident status for expatriate Chinese students and scholars.

Professionalism

Professionalism is another factor that has helped CND survive the years and rise to global popularity among the Chinese students abroad. It can be seen in three aspects: internal organization, magazine layout, and journalistic ethics.

Over the years, CND has undergone a transformation from a loose volunteer group to a news organization with professional internal structure. This effort was seen as early as three months after the birth of CND itself. In June 1989, there were only five group members in CND's management. Nevertheless, professionalism was not ignored. Work was internally divided among the group members, and one manager was elected. Ever since then, CND has held all-member elections every year, with each manager on a one-year tenure. In January 1996, CND established a board of directors. The board, whose members are elected every two years, appoints a manager, who is in charge of the daily operations and acts as the editor-in-chief for all CND publications. Under the manager are groups of editors for particular publications. They are responsible for collecting, reporting, and editing news. This formal internal structure enables CND to operate like a professional news organization.

Professionalism is also seen in CND's efforts to make its publications professional looking. Among other things, a comparison between HXWZ's first issues and its latest issues exemplifies the progress the magazine has made in this direction. For example, in its initial issues, HXWZ did not have a consistent masthead. In some issues, there were only the four plain Chinese characters for HXWZ. Others included CND to show the relationship between the two. Publishing date was not put high at the top. There were no column names nor author names in the table of contents. No news was reported.

Horizontal article lines sometimes were as long as 335 characters.[1] Except the name of

the editor for the current issue, no other information about the editors or publishers was

given. In its later issues, HXWZ has an artistic and informative masthead. Articles are

grouped into columns. Author names are cited. The news section has a fixed place in the

magazine. Horizontal lines of texts are shortened to facilitate reading. Editor and

subscription information is provided in detail. All these reflect the efforts that the editors

have made to ensure that the magazine has a professional appearance.[2]

Journalistic ethics have also played their role in CND's development. In CND's

early years, reprinted or translated news items and articles occupied a dominant part. As

it grows more professional, CND develops its sense of journalistic ethics. It feels the need

to "voluntarily comply with the copyright law" (CND,1998). In November 1994, CND

set up a working group of news writers. Members of the group are not current CND staff

members, but are willing to contribute their time and skills to CND's English services.

The main task of the group is to "rewrite news brief items or to compile and rewrite full-

item news based on the original news sources for CND posting" (ibid.). In fact, this group

has a critical role in CND's daily operation (ibid.). Meanwhile, though CND does not

prohibit its members from pursuing politics, it has strict rules to avoid conflict of interests

in its news reporting to ensure unbiasedness (ibid.).

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[1] See Issue No. 2, 1991. http://www.cnd.org/HXWZ/CM91/cm9104b.gb.html. A line of text disappears off
to the right hand side of the screen and the reader must scroll across the equivalent width of four to five
screen pages before dropping down to the next line, back on the first screen.
[2] For CND's efforts to improve the professionalism of its English publications, see Wen, Bing (1992).
China News Digest: A Journalistic Attempt on Worldwide Computer Networks. MJ thesis, Carleton
University, Ottawa, Canada.

4.2   Buffalonians Model

Buffalonians is an online Chinese magazine run by Chinese students and scholars

at the State University of New York at Buffalo. Like the CND model, this non-profit

magazine was operated by individual volunteers. But different from the CND model, it

was locally oriented and operated.

The bimonthly first appeared on February 10, 1994. Though the Chinese title

remained the same over its years, the original English title was "CSS in Buffalo"

(CSSB).[1] The purpose of the magazine was to "get self-education to perfect oneself"

(CSSB,1994b). It had regular columns about academic topics, literature, world affairs,

and life of the expatriate Chinese students and scholars. Some traits stood out during its

development.

First, as the readers of the magazine were students at the same school, it tried to

include those campus events that were interesting to the Chinese students. For example,

under the column title of "Campus Report," Issue No. 5 reported the visit to the school by

a well-known expatriate Chinese dissident. Nevertheless, this kind of report was both

random and infrequent.

Second, only a handful of students were involved in and responsible for the

routine operation of the magazine under rather harsh conditions. On average, the

magazine's editing board consisted of ten students.[2] The staff members remained

comparatively stable over the years, but lacked both funds and helpers. They had to do

everything by themselves in their spare time. Usually each of them served several roles at

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[1] CSS refers to Chinese Students and Scholars.
[2] This figure is based on the published names of editors at the end of each issue. The actual figure might be lower, because there is a strong possibility that some of the names are pen names of the same editor.

the same time – as editor, proofreader, typist, and technical support. Whenever there were

not enough contributions, they had to write articles themselves to fill up the empty space.

Therefore, it was a common occurrence that names of the organizers appeared twice on a

same issue.[1]

Third, the magazine mainly depended on contributions from students at the

school. For instance, the contributors to the first issue came from the departments or

colleges of chemistry, management, biophysics, and psychology. They used their specific

knowledge to talk about a topic of interest to general readers. In the same issue, a student

majoring in management introduced how to make investments and manage the risks.

Fourth, the preset publication frequency was hardly even kept. Originally, the

magazine was supposed to be out on the fourth day of every other month, but this rule

was almost immediately ignored after the first issue due to changes in the operating staff.

For example, Issue No. 6 was delayed for as long as two months, because the editor left

the school and no replacement was found immediately (Du, 1994).

Finally, the operation of the magazine was on and off. After less than a year of

operation, the magazine suspended publication in December 1994 after Issue No. 5. It did

not resume until June 1996 when a small group of new students took over the magazine,

but the new magazine lasted for only three months. In September, after Issue No. 7,

publication ceased completely.

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[1] For example, in Issue No. 7, four out of the 13 contributors were staff members. The editor-in-chief wrote
an article in memory of his or her first teacher and another full of anecdotes about putting the magazine
together. For detail, read the issue at http://www.sunrisesite.org/gh/magazine/buffalo/buf07.hz

4.3   Leeds Model

Established in 1993, "Leeds Tong Xun" or "Leeds News" in English, was an

official magazine of the Leeds CSSA in the United Kingdom, jointly run by the Chinese

students and scholars in the region. The purpose of the publication was "to reflect the

studies and lives of the Chinese students in the Leeds region, to promote information

exchanges among the students, and to facilitate their studies and lives in the United

Kingdom" (Leeds, 1994). It was similar to both CND and Buffalonians in that it also

depended on individual efforts in its operation. The magazine had its editor-in-chief.

Each editor took turns working on a particular issue. But it was different from the

previous models because the magazine was the mouthpiece of a student organization and

oriented itself to regional readers.

The main characteristic of this model was the dominant role of the regional CSSA

in the routine operation of the magazine. This role manifested itself in two ways. First, in

the regional student organization, there was a committee member in charge of the

magazine. The establishment of the position showed the importance that the organization

attached to the magazine. The role of the member was to coordinate the operation of the

publication. For example, the committee member helped to seek and forward

contributions to the magazine.

The second role that the regional CSSA played in the development of the

magazine was seen in the dominance of reports on the organization's events in issues of

the magazines. Roughly speaking, CSSA-related reports occupied 50 percent of the total

contents in an issue. For instance, in the first issue, there were altogether eight articles.

Four of them were about the regional CSSA. Stories in that category covered the 1992-

1993 yearly report of the organization as well as the results of the election of new committee members, their responsibilities, and contact information. This content balance was basically followed in the later issues. The magazine's efforts to focus on events organized by the regional CSSA were more noticeable in its regular column called "News Window." The column reported exclusively on events associated with the student organization. It was usually put high at the top of the magazine with a dominant length. In a sense, the magazine served as a bulletin board of the Leeds CSSA.

Though the magazine oriented itself to its readers scattered across the region, it obviously centered on Leeds University, home to a majority of the Chinese students in the region. As a result, most of the staff came from the university, most of the articles were contributed by students in the university, and most of the events covered by the magazine took place on the school campus. This preference of the publication was further contributed to by the fact that in 1993 that all the members of the regional CSSA but one were students at Leeds University.[1]

4.4   FHY Model

Feng Hua Yuan (FHY) is a comprehensive online expatriate Chinese student magazine on news, current affairs, culture and art relating to China. It is published under the auspices of the Federation of Chinese Students and Professionals Canada (FCSPC).[2] It is distributed in cyberspace on the first, tenth, and twentieth days of each month. The magazine's title is spelt in accordance with the pronunciation of standard Chinese popular on mainland China. In English it literally means "Maple" "China" "Garden" or "Chinese

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[1] See "New CSSA Has Formed and Started Work." No. 1, 1993.
     http://www.sunrisesite.org/library/gb/magazine/leeds/lz9301.hz
[2] Previously called "Federation of Chinese Students and Scholars in Canada" (FCSSC).

Maple Garden." Born on September 20, 1993, FHY aims to "look at the era of reforms

from the prospective of ordinary Chinese students abroad, and to reflect their feelings"

(Huang,1995b). In less than six years, it has developed from a magazine with an initial

readership of 600 to a major online publication in the global community of the expatriate

Chinese students.[1] Within the five months from November 1998 to March 1999, 327,281

readers visited FHY's Web site.[2] The readership would be much higher if hits at other

sites that archive copies of the magazine, such as the *Sunrise Library*, were taken into

consideration. The uniqueness of this model lies mainly in four aspects: role of

FCSSC/FCSPC, aid from regional CSSA magazines, support of readers, and diversity of

opinions.

Role of FCSSC/FCSPC

The FCSSC played a direct role in contributing to the birth of FHY. Established

in 1989 shortly after the June 4 Tiananmen Square Incident, its first national congress

was held from July 14 to 16 at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. Forty-six

representatives from 25 Canadian universities attended the congress. By1995, it had a

membership of more than 40,000 scattered among the 35 local CSSAs across Canada

(Huang,1995b). With its membership steadily growing across such a vast country, the

FCSSC felt the need to run a formal national publication to supplement its randomly

published FCSSCD-L Network, a computer network for information exchange and open

discussion in English. Advantages such as easy and inexpensive operation, high speed,

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[1] A random survey to see which online student magazine archived in the virtual *Sunrise Library* was most widely read listed FHY as the most popular. For more information, read Fang, Zhouzi "Which Electronic Magazine Has the Biggest Readership." November 16, 1996 at alt.Chinese.text
[2] The figure is based on the calculator on FHY's homepage. For more information, visit http://fhy.net

and unlimited geographical distribution prompted the FCSSC to create an online Chinese magazine to promote the connection among Chinese students and scholars in Canada. The national student organization appointed its secretary-general to be responsible for the preparatory work of the proposed magazine. Fifteen people were solicited over the FCSSC's network to form FHY's first group of staff (Chen, Z. 1998).

The FCSSC's role can be better seen in its relationship with FHY. This relationship, clearly defined in FCSSC's related documents, can be summarized as the following (FHY, 1994):

- FHY has the responsibility to report on the FCSSC's guidelines and events organized by FCSSC and local CSSAs. The FCSSC has the right of supervision in this aspect;

- FHY has decision-making power over its finances, personnel, publishing principles and ways of operation;

- FHY's chief executive automatically sits on the FCSSC's board of executives and is directly involved in the FCSSC's routine operation; and

- The FCSSC is responsible for helping FHY in terms of budget, personnel, network sources, and distribution.

The parent organization's role is also visible in FHY's routine operation, especially in its early days. One of the reasons why many online student magazines died as soon as they were born was that they could not find as many articles as necessary to keep running. FHY was lucky because the FCSSC offered it many topics immediately after the magazine's birth. For instance, roughly 80 per cent of FHY's first issue covered FCSSC and regional CSSA events. Columns included "FCSSC Literature," "Regional

CSSA News," and "Local News." Issue 29 was even completely devoted to the FCSSC's sixth congress, with such columns as "Words from FCSSC Chairmen," "Sixth Congress News," "Sixth Congress Documents," "FCSSC Literature," and "FCSSC Information."[1] This close relationship also provided FHY with a stable readership among the FCSSC's members. With such a big and influential national student organization standing behind it, the magazine enjoyed at its birth an edge seldom available to other online expatriate student magazines.

Aid From Regional Magazines

FHY's existence and development would be impossible without the support of the regional CSSA magazines in Canada. Before the birth of FHY, at least three regional magazines were operating regularly in Canada. Two of them were online magazines – LYTX in Ottawa and Life's Window in Calgary. The third one, Tian Nan Hai Bei (TNHB), was a printed publication by CSSA at the University of Toronto. Each of them had a stable and competent staff and was enjoying regional popularity among the Chinese students. To help the official publication of their superior national organization, the regional magazines made great contributions to FHY. Many of the regional magazine editors worked for FHY in addition to their own publications. They "did Chinese input for FHY at night while wrote for LYTX or TNHB at weekend" (Chen, Z.1998). Later, to better concentrate the limited staffing resources on the national magazine, these regional publications merged with FHY. This combination enabled FHY to absorb almost all the backbone editors and writers in the major regional CSSAs in Canada. Many of them

[1] For the specific contents in the columns, see "FCSSC Sixth Congress Special," No. 29, FHY, August 10, 1994. http://fhy.net

played important roles in FHY's later development. For instance, LYTX's editor-in-chief became FHY's third editor-in-chief. One of TNHB's writers served as a major contributor to FHY. Support from these regional magazines "helped FHY lay a solid foundation in its initial days" (ibid.).

Support of Readers

To a great extent, FHY attributes its development to the support of its readers. In fact, this support came before the magazine was born. In the fall of 1993, while preparing for the birth of the proposed magazine, the FCSSC solicited suggestions for the publication's title from its members over the Internet. Before the deadline, the editors received 83 responses with more than 50 suggested titles. The title FHY was selected from these suggestions (FHY, 1993).

Over the years, FHY's readers have also contributed a large number of articles to the magazine. In its early issues, like HXWZ, FHY had to rely on editing or reprinting articles from other sources. But with more and more contributions from its readers, two years after its birth, the magazine was basically publishing its own articles (Chen, Z. 1998). "Though many of these contributions do not look as professional as those in commercial magazines, they come from our readers. They are about the common experience that we share. Every word is so true. This truthfulness binds FHY's readers, writers, and editors" (ibid.).

A great majority of FHY's readers are students and students-turned-professionals (FHY, 1998a). They are not rich financially. Quite a number of them are not earning any money at all. But whenever FHY runs into difficulty, it can always expect support from its readers. A recent example is FHY's call for donations to buy its own network system

and computers. In the past five years of its existence, <u>FHY</u> mainly depended on sharing

servers in various universities in Canada and the United States for publication,

distribution, and storage (Chen, Z. 1998). This practice was both unstable and

inconvenient. In mid-1998, <u>FHY</u> decided to purchase its own network system and

computers. Budget constraints forced it to call on its readers for financial help on June

10. The call met with quick and positive responses. Within three months, readers from

across the world donated more than $9,000 Canadian. Many readers expressed their

readiness to offer technical support or equipment at a reduced price. Others made various

suggestions to help <u>FHY</u> become more competent financially. As seen in the following

excerpts from the readers' letters, the support was enthusiastic (<u>FHY</u>, 1998b):

- **We are <u>FHY</u>'s dedicated readers. All the time we have believed that <u>FHY</u> is a magazine of us expatriate Chinese students and scholars. It has not only provided spiritual food [1] to us who are away from our homeland but concerned about its development. Moreover, the magazine has voiced what we have in mind, and mentally connected us global migrants. We support it with enthusiasm.**

  We find it unimaginable that the magazine should have no server and network of its own. As computer professionals, we can fully understand the difficulty that you have experienced with such a large readership but without your own server and network. Here, we make a donation of $xx.[2] If you need any professional help, we are willing to give a hand.

- **I am both a dedicated reader and a beneficiary of <u>FHY</u>. Right now, I am a student, with limited financial resources. With the little donation, I just wish to express my support. I sincerely hope that <u>FHY</u> will go on and become better... I am an ordinary person. Please do not publicize my name.**

- **Enclosed please find a cheque for $xx. As I am attending school on student loans, I am not rich. Only to express my support.**

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[1] A popular term among mainland Chinese to refer to products of books, magazines, and other mass media.
[2] The exact amount of donation is not revealed.

Meanwhile, I am especially grateful to you because it was through FHY's *Cyberfriends* that I met my wife who is now far away in Japan.

Support from readers like these has helped FHY overcome one difficulty after another, and survive its years. As the magazine's editors have said, the support is "the momentum for FHY's existence and development. We feel the existence of a Chinese community. We are proud of being able to do something with the rest in the community to make our lives more fulfilled, friendship more sincere, and careers more rewarding" (FHY, 1998b).

Diversity of Opinions

A magazine needs to develop something unique to attract and keep readers' attention. This in turn helps the magazine to survive and develop, because it is easier to get readers' support. The main uniqueness with FHY during its development has been its ability to voice a diversity of opinions. This practice has enabled the magazine to stand out from similar media and get a maximum of support from its readers as it develops. This feature manifests itself most obviously in FHY's forum columns. In the 193 issues from September 1993 to March 1999, FHY has published 215 opinion articles in its forum columns.[1]

FHY's attention to opinion columns has been seen ever since its birth. In its initial issues, this was closely associated with influence from FCSSC. For instance, in Issue No. 1 an article entitled "Should We Support Beijing to Host Year 2000 Olympic Games?" examined the results of an FCSSC online survey. It described both the positive and negative responses from the students. During FHY's first six months or so, there were

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1 This figure is based on my personal counting.

designated stable forum columns in the magazine. Opinions were voiced under such

column titles as "Everyone's Opinion," "Argument Garden," "Observation and

Thinking," and "Ideological Exploration." Since mid-1994, FHY has stabilized its forum

columns as "Feng Hua Forum," "Argument," and "China Forum."[1] Topics for debate

have been widened to include politics, foreign affairs, military matters, economics,

society, arts, etc.[2] Meanwhile, forum articles are becoming an increasing percentage of

FHY's overall contents.[3] In some cases, a whole issue is devoted to opinion or debate

articles.[4]

In FHY, everyone's opinion can be heard no matter what it is. For instance, on the

first anniversary of Deng Xiaoping's death, three readers talked about their comments on

Deng. The first contributor was from Beijing. He said that speaking from whichever

angle, China's development was closely associated with Deng. No matter what China

would develop to be, Deng's contributions in the country's modern history could not be

denied. The second reader believed Deng had done both good and harm to China. In

Deng's first half of life, his harm outweighed his good, while in the second part of his

life, it was just the opposite. The third participant agreed that Deng was a great person

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[1] FHY does not give specific differences among the three forum columns. But it seems that the first two are for general debates while the third focuses only on mainland China.

[2] The following is a sample list of some of the articles:
- Sense of Responsibility to Men and Women (No. 75, November 20, 1995)
- On Inequality (No. 88, April 1, 1996)
- Aggressive Attack -- America's Latest Propaganda Strategy to China (No. 144, October 20, 1997)
- Where Will "One Country, Two Systems" Lead? (No. 145, November 1, 1997)
- Will the People's Liberation Army Win a Quick War over the Taiwan Straits? (No. 146, November 10, 1997)
- What Jiang Gains and Loses from His U.S. Visit? (No. 147, November 20, 1997)
- On Reforms of the State Enterprises (No. 150, December 20, 1997)

[3] Generally speaking, the more recent the issues are, the more forum articles there are. For example, Issue No. 1 had only one such article while in Issue No. 145 on November 10, 1997, three out of the whole seven articles were forum articles.

[4] An example is Issue No. 140 on September 10, 1997. Theme topics included "Why I Don't Buy Japanese Goods" and "Will the United States Send Troops to Protect Taiwan?"

who had changed China and influenced the world, but he thought he was not qualified to comment on Deng.[1]

When there are different opinions about a topic, FHY makes sure both or all sides are voiced. In fact, it often publishes conflicting articles side by side. For example, on November 3, 1997, Hawaii University newspaper published an article criticizing China's policy on Tibet. As a response to the article, FHY published two articles with opposite opinions in Issue No. 151. Entitled "Does the American Author Understand Tibet?" the first article claimed that the Hawaii article was biased and lacked supporting fact. The second article disputed this by asking "Do We Understand Tibet?" Since it is quite popular for Chinese media overseas to publish only articles reflecting their own views (Ma,1998), FHY's practice is significant. As expressed by one of its readers and contributors, the practice has won respect from its readers (ibid.):

> **FHY publishes both my articles and those against me. I can not judge whether a magazine really advocates freedom of speech or not by examining whether it accepts my contributions or not. But I do appreciate FHY's boldness to publish articles on both sides.**

4.5   Conclusion

The four models represent four ways of evolution and development of the online expatriate student magazines. The CND model focuses exclusively on efforts of independent individual students and students-turned-professionals scattered across the world. Their journalistic practice is entirely a private activity. The Buffalonians model also stresses individual efforts, but these efforts are made by students on a particular school campus. Magazines following this model are locally run, locally oriented, and

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[1] For details of the discussion, see Issue No. 120 on February 20, 1997.

locally influential. These efforts are also coupled with involvement of Chinese student

organizations. In the Leeds model, the journalistic activity is official. The magazines are

an integral part of the regional CSSAs. The development of these publications is,

therefore, closely associated with their student organizations. The FHY model is similar

to the Leeds model except that the involvement of the student organizations is on the

national, not regional, level.

Which development model to choose is not a matter of preference for the online

expatriate student magazines. The diversity on the models reflects the complexity of the

environments in which the magazines are born and existing. Factors that play critical

roles in environment include such things as the number of Chinese students, degree of

community awareness, readiness of volunteer staff, effectiveness of student

organizations, and availability of technical support. Whether a magazine can survive and

develop depends greatly on the ability of the operators of the magazine to accurately

estimate these factors and orient the magazine to them.

Generally speaking, of the four models, the Buffalonians model is the most

popular among the online expatriate student magazines in terms of number, but

magazines in this category are always short-lived. Magazines following the Leeds and

FHY models are the second most popular in total numbers with a fairly stable

survivability. The CND model is basically a rare occurrence. This conclusion is

supported by my examination of the electronic student magazines currently archived in

Sunrise Library,[1] which claims to be "the world's most comprehensive on-line database

in Chinese" (Sunrise). In the library's "Online Magazines" section, there are altogether

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[1] As of March 18, 1999.

23 expatriate student magazines. Eleven of them fall into the Buffalonians model and nine belong to the Leeds and FHY models. The other three can be grouped with the CND category. Surprisingly, all the Buffalonians-model magazines have ceased publication. Some of them published as few as a couple of issues.[1] Four out of the nine Leeds and FHY model ones are still in operation. CND's HXWZ is the only Chinese-language survivor in its category.

A couple of reasons can be explored to explain the situation. First, publication is something very attractive. Everyone likes to see his or her name in print, either as a writer or editor. Especially with today's desktop publishing tools and online technology, it gives many people a false impression that anyone can do online publication. This temptation is particularly strong to Chinese students abroad, who were denied of the right for free publication inside China because of the Communist dictatorship. When suddenly exposed to the possibility to run their own publications, few expatriate Chinese students can resist the temptation. That explains why so many online magazines have cropped up on campuses.

Unfortunately, as with many other things, it is easy to start an online magazine, but hard to keep the magazine going, and to make it attractive. To run an online Chinese magazine consumes both energy and time. The inputting of Chinese characters itself can be a daunting task. It is unrealistic to depend totally on a handful of students who themselves have tight schedules and hard studies. Many publishers of magazines of the Buffalonians model are not well prepared psychologically and technically for this difficulty. Besides, since these magazines are privately run by individual students on a

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[1] For instance, Xi Xian (XX) came out only twice before its closure.

single campus, they have very limited resources of help, such as information channels, volunteer staff, and reader support.

Leeds and FHY model magazines are popular and stable because these two models overcome the above mentioned limitations of the Buffalonians and CND models. First, the publication of a magazine is no longer an isolated act. Instead, it is integrated into the overall task of a regional or national student organization. This relationship not only gives a magazine more topics to talk about but also a guaranteed source of support. The publication can always expect help from its regional or national supervisory organization. This advantage helps to keep a magazine from dying young. Second, since the publishers and readers share the same geographical location, magazines of the models tend to have a well defined readership. This makes it easy for a magazine to identify its readers' needs and orient itself to them. Third, by allowing students from various sources within the same region or country of residence to jointly run a magazine, these models distribute the work and responsibility of running a magazine. Consequently, they also distribute the risks of operation and thus enhance a magazine's survivability. While changes in staff often bring a Buffalonians or CND-model magazine to an unexpected end, this is not a problem with publications following the Leeds and FHY models. In these models, a magazine is the result of concerted regional or national contributions.

While on the whole the CND model is not a fortuitous pattern among the online expatriate Chinese student magazines,[1] CND itself, especially its HXWZ, is a successful exception. Among other things, a major reason that can account for this exception is the fact that CND has basically been run by a group of well established students-turned-

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[1] Two out of the three magazines of this model archived in *Sunrise Library* no longer exist.

professionals instead of currently enrolled students on campus (CND,1998). They have

an obvious economic and technical edge over the students still on campus in running an

online magazine.

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Chapter 5
Online Expatriate Student Magazines: Accessible Back At Home?

As their name suggests, online expatriate student magazines are born and develop

abroad. They have played an important role in the global community of the Chinese

students overseas. These publications are fundamentally different from the traditional

printed media in that they are online magazines, meaning they have no geographical

boundaries and can be accessed everywhere in the world. Since they are Chinese media,

one may naturally ask whether these expatriate student magazines can reach an audience

"at home" back in China. This is not a yes-no question. To answer it, one has to examine

both the senders and the potential receivers. Particularly, one has to see if the magazines

are targeting themselves at all at receivers inside China, and at the same time if those at

home can and are ready to accept these overseas media.

5.1   Online Expatriate Student Magazines: Not Ready to Reach Home

My examination of the online expatriate student media shows that though also

reaching and influencing audience back in China may be an eventual goal, at least at

present these magazines are not ready to do so. This unreadiness can be seen both in the

magazines' operating principles and their contents.

Operating Principles

Every news medium has its own operating principle, explicitly stated or implicitly

understood. It defines the general goal or mission of the news medium and the guidelines

that it will follow in its operation to fulfill this preset goal and mission. Therefore, an effective way to see whether an online expatriate Chinese student magazine at present sees reaching an audience inside China as a priority is to examine its operating principle.

The following is a list of the operating principles of the five magazines archived in the *Sunrise Library* that are still publishing regularly today:

China-Deutschland Nachrichten (Germany):

an electronic magazine that serves Chinese students in Germany. It provides its readers with information about China, the Chinese government's policy on studying abroad, and consulting service on going back to work in China (CDN, 1994).

Feng Hua Yuan (Canada):

looks at the era of reforms from the prospective of ordinary Chinese students overseas, and to reflect their feelings" (Huang, 1995b).

Hua Xia Wen Zhai (U.S.A.):

mainly select excellent pieces from major overseas and domestic Chinese magazines (HXWZ, 1991).

Northern Lights (Sweden):

publishes Swedish news and various kinds of articles about the Swedish society, lives of Chinese students in Sweden, and any information or pieces that the Chinese students like or are concerned about (NL, 1998).

Tulip (Holland):

a publication of our own to reflect our lives, what we see, think, and do so that all of us can feel the warmness of friendship, spiritual comfort, and the richness of life (Tulip, 1994).

An examination of these principles shows at least two similarities. First, publishers of the magazines consider Chinese students abroad, not those back at home, as their targeted readers. These media exist to serve these students' needs. The magazines

are run by Chinese students abroad and are published for Chinese students abroad, rooting the media firmly in the expatriate Chinese student community.

Second, in bridging between the diasporic group of expatriate Chinese students and their homeland, the magazines function more as receivers of information from inside China than as senders of information back to China. At least at present, their major task is to inform the homesick students of what is happening back in China. They have not deliberately chosen to use their limited resources to also do the opposite. Any access to them from inside China is only a spin-off of their existence.

Content Analysis

An examination of the magazines' contents also supports the statement that the expatriate Chinese student magazines are not yet ready to consider reaching home audiences and influencing them as their major task.

As a case study, I examined the contents of all HXWZ's 1998 issues. I chose HXWZ because it is one of the most widely read and most influential expatriate student magazines in the world, including in China.[1] I selected 1998 because it is the year that has just passed and therefore can most accurately reflect the content patterns in the current issues of the magazine. Due to the huge amount of information in the issues of 1998, I focused only on China-related articles. For the same reason, I excluded news since it is not produced by the magazine itself, and also literature and entertainment

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[1] In early 1998, at least one official Chinese newspaper, Yangtse Evening News, in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province, listed HXWZ in its online edition as one of the recommended links for its readers. The daily tabloid currently claims to have a daily circulation of 1.32 million. As of April 22, 1999, though HXWZ was still in the paper's list of recommended sites, the link was disconnected. It is not known whether the disconnection was due to political considerations or technical factors.

columns.[1] To separate the information coming out of China from that produced overseas, I divided the articles into two major categories: domestic sources and overseas sources. Within articles from overseas sources, I subdivided them into three themes: sensitive topics, expatriate student-only topics, and miscellaneous topics. Under the first theme are mainly forum or opinion articles. Because the ideas in the articles are usually different from the Communist propaganda inside China, they are supposed to be the most likely to reach and influence those back in China. The second theme deals exclusively with lives of the Chinese students abroad and their reminiscence of their past days back at home. Articles belonging to the third theme are devoted to such Chinese culture topics as recipes.

In the whole of 1998, HXWZ published 51 issues with a total of 177 China-related articles. Among the articles, 66 or 37.3 per cent came from sources inside China, while 111 or 62.7 per cent were taken from overseas Chinese press or written by expatriate students or students-turned-professionals. Within the 111 articles from overseas sources, 65 belonged to the theme of sensitive topics, 33 fell into the student-only group, and 13 were miscellaneous.

Since people in China have already received domestically reported news, and the expatriate Chinese student-only topics are something too narrow and specific to attract them, arguably the only attraction of the online expatriate student magazines to those inside China would come from the 65 forum or opinion articles. Occupying 36.5 per cent out of the total of 177, this portion is far from dominant in the overall content patterns.

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[1] As will be shown on page 105, these categories are of marginal interest to Net users in mainland China, according to survey results.

Besides, judging from such factors as wording and tone,[1] these articles are not necessarily meant for domestic readers. In fact, quite a number of the articles were reprinted from other overseas sources that those inside China can also get access to online.

5.2   The Internet In China: A Dilemma

No matter whether printed or electronic, a medium is first of all understood as something that transports, or carries, texts and delivers them to audiences (Berger,1995:54). Whether a message can be sent and received relies totally on the availability of such a physical medium. Online media are particularly dependent on their version of this physical medium.

In the send-receive process, the availability of online technology and equipment is a critical link. Online media publishers depend fully on online technology for information transmission. Equally, end users of the media need corresponding technology to retrieve and decode the messages put out online. Therefore, to examine whether people inside China access the online expatriate student magazines, one has to first see whether there is such a technical possibility in China. If the answer is yes, one also has to examine how widely accessible this possibility is to ordinary Chinese. Though taking a new form, the nature of online media as mass media remains unchanged. If they are targeting a large population, but only a tiny portion of the population can receive them, the media become meaningless.[2] At the same time, because China is a Communist country where mass

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[1] For example, it is quite common for the authors to refer to China as "back at home" in their articles. This choice of words implies that the authors are assuming that they are writing for those not "at home."

[2] Berger (1995:153) has excellent remarks on this issue. He writes, "If a tree falls in a forest but there is nobody around to hear it fall, does it make a sound? Philosophers dispute this matter. Let me ask a related question: If a television show airs but nobody watches it, does it make a sound? The answer is, Yes, but not for long."

media in whichever form are tightly controlled by the government, one has to consider

how much the Communist party can tolerate the online media. Only after all these factors

have been taken into consideration can one understand the question about the

accessibility of the expatriate student media in China.

In the eyes of the Communist party in China, the Internet is a dilemma. On the

one hand, the government has realized the great economic benefits that it can get for its

modernization drive from joining the international information flows on the Internet. That

is why the Chinese government is making painstaking efforts to develop the online

network in the country. But on the other hand, the Communist party is afraid that the

feature of the Internet as an easy access to international information will jeopardize its

traditionally firm control of the country. Therefore, while developing the online network,

the Chinese government is trying to create an effective informational boundary between

China and the rest of the world (Mueller & Tan, 1997:94).

Internet Development in China: Rapid Yet Still Limited

Since 1991, the Internet has significantly changed the development of world

telecommunications. Two things have made the Internet a revolutionary innovation. First,

its decentralized, bottom-up development gave users both more control and more

investment responsibility. Second, it can tap into users, technologies, and established

mass media interests (Mueller & Tan, 1997:82). However, the biggest attraction of the

Internet comes from the endless, real-time information that is being produced,

transmitted, and distributed online. As ours is an age of information, this feature is

particularly important in today's world. The success of a country is no longer measured

merely economically. Rather, it is determined by how much and how quickly information

is available to the country, and how the information is productively used. Information can mean everything: new knowledge, advanced technologies, economic development... For this reason, countries across the world compete to jump on the information highway. Having suffered from its historically inert reaction to new technologies, China is determined to catch up with this new round of international competition.

China started its direct connection to the Internet in 1994 (HXWZ,1998). Since then, China's computer communication network has been developing at surprising speed. Internet subscribers in mid-1995 numbered only 40.000 with 10.000 in Beijing (CND-Global,1998a). However, statistics released by the Chinese government in early 1999 showed that by December 31, 1998, China had a total of 2.1 million Internet users (Yang, Z.,1999) and 747,000 computers were connected to the Internet (HSB,1999a). China's Department of Information Industry estimates that in 1999, 1.5 million more Internet users will be added in the country. By the end of 2000, the number is expected to surpass 4.5 million (ibid.).

A 1997 survey showed that among Internet users in China, the average age was 34, 81 per cent were male and over 95 per cent had education above college. Nearly 30 per cent were using the Internet at their own expense. Top on the list of reasons to go online is to get information. About half the users cited this as their No. 1 reason for using the Internet. Next came e-mail. Only 20 per cent were sending out information on the Internet (PD,1998b:1).

The same survey also indicated that of the information online, Chinese users were most interested in computer science, then travelling and shopping. Ten per cent of the total users were fond of literature and art, business, natural sciences, and education. The

survey concluded that China was still in the starting stage in terms of online trade and entertainment (ibid.).

This rate of development may sound impressive, but when one turns to China's overall state situation, the picture does not look so rosy. At present, China has a population of around 1,300 million. Among it, 220 million are illiterate, 180 million of whom are over 15 years old (HSB,1999b). The overwhelming majority of China's population is still not computer literate (Mueller & Tan:1997:95). Currently, 69.1 per cent of the urban youth population are unable to go online (HSB,1999c), not to mention those in the rural areas. Those who are computer literate and can afford access to international computer networks are higher level business managers, researchers, professors, and graduate students at elite universities (Mueller & Tan,1997:96). This small group of people represents only a tiny portion of the country's total population. To the great majority of the Chinese people, the Internet is still something tantalizingly distant -- if they have heard about it at all.

As suggested above, there are at least two objective factors that are preventing more Chinese from getting online. The first is economic while the second is technical.

Economically, to most Chinese, the fee for getting online is too expensive. The fee consists of two parts: a fee for using the Internet, and a fee for using the telephone. In eastern Jiangxi Province, a Jiujiang city resident has to pay 20 yuan to use the Internet for ten hours. For each extra minute, the user has to pay five fen. The telephone fee is 0.20 yuan for each three minutes. To get online for 30 hours a month, a user would altogether have to pay 200 yuan, with 80 yuan for the Internet fee and 120 yuan for the telephone

fee (He,1999).[1] In a country where an associate professor with a doctoral degree in

physics at the elite Beijing University earned in 1997 a monthly income of less than 500

yuan (Yang. X.1998), this is not a small amount of money at all to the ordinary people.

One has to think twice before getting online in a country which saw 50 million people

living on less than 640 yuan (about $80 U.S.) a year each in 1997.[2]

On March 1, 1999, the Chinese government announced a 50 per cent overall price

reduction for postal and telecommunications services in the country. Nevertheless, online

survey results show that 90 per cent of the country's Net users are complaining about the

new price adjustment. They argue that because the new pricing system replaces the

previous fixed monthly rate system with hourly payments, it actually makes them pay

more for using the Internet for the same number of hours (Zhang. D.1999).[3]

Technical support for online communication is quite limited in China. Due to a

low rate of popularization of the computer, China has to depend on telephone networks or

even television cable networks to transfer digital signals. As a result, the quality is

impaired. Besides, China has insufficient access to the Internet. As late as 1996, most Net

traffic to and from China had to flow through a single 56 kilobit circuit in Shanghai, less

bandwidth than many U.S. homes enjoy (Ramo,1998:42). Consequently, many users

could not be served at their desired times. This situation had not been fundamentally

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[1] There are three basic units in the Chinese money Renminbi: *yuan, jiao*, and *fen*. *Yuan* is the biggest. One *yuan* is equal to ten *jiao*, and one *jiao* is equal to ten *fen*. As of March 19, 1999,$1 U.S. was equal to 8.27 *yuan*. One Canadian dollar equalled 5.45 *yuan*. For more detailed exchange rate information, see "Finance and Stock." Shanghai Window at http://www.shanghai-window.com/shanghai/newsh/newindex.html

[2] For more information about China's poverty population, see Appendix 4.

[3] According to an Internet user, browsing online for 100 hours each month cost more than 500 yuan before the price adjustment. But now, for the same number of hours, one has to pay over 800 yuan. For more information, read Zhang, Dongchao (1999).

changed for the better by the end of 1998. State statistics show that as many as 92 per

cent of Chinese Internet users complain of the slow speed at which they are connected

online (Yang, Z. 1999). It was reported in early 1999 that China had succeeded in

expanding its circuit capacity to 200 kilobits in Beijing and Guangzhou (ibid.). China has

also promised to make an average annual investment of 140 billion yuan on construction

of its digital communication networks (HSB, 1999a). But because of China's big

population, the present situation of insufficient technical support for Internet

communication may remain significantly unchanged in essence for quite a period of time.

Chinese Government: Building "Great Firewall"

The ruling Communist party of China adopts the so-called "mouthpiece" media

theory. Under this theory, the media should serve the interests of the socialist state, the

state being an embodiment of all the members of a classless society. Because the media

are of the people, they belong to the people. Since the party is supposed to represent the

interests of the people, the media naturally belong to the people's leadership. The tasks of

media are to socialize the people into desirable norms as defined in Marxist doctrine – to

educate, inform, motivate and mobilize the people in the aims and aspirations of a

socialist society. In a word, the news media are the mouthpiece of the party. In practice,

to ensure an effective implementation of the theory, the Communist party creates a strong

media monopoly through a centralized control of the mass media. As a result, no news

medium in China is not subject to the party's leadership, supervision, and direction.

But this traditionally effective way to maintain the party monopoly on public

discourse has been increasingly challenged by the Internet. With the Internet, the Chinese

now can bypass the media curtain that the party has been building over the years to keep

its people from joining the international flow of information. This international access
contains elements of the Chinese government's worst nightmare (Mueller &
Tan,1997:89). If international Internet access were allowed to grow without control, the
Communist leadership in China and the government's powers of surveillance and
censorship would be eroded. Therefore, it is quite natural for the Chinese Communist
government to take a precautionary attitude toward the threats posed by the Internet.

Basically speaking, the Chinese government has adapted its current system of
print and broadcast controls to the Internet (Mueller & Tan,1997:95). To ensure that the
Internet does not become a destabilizing force, it has also exploited its monopoly in the
country's telecommunications industry, especially in the field of international
telecommunications. The key features of these preventive measures have been
summarized into the following:

1. The state permits an impressive amount of pluralism domestically, but
   restricts access to international information sources and networks.

2. The government relies heavily on the combination of business enterprise
   functions with regulatory and administrative functions to carry out state
   policy.

3. The government cannot permit spontaneous privatization or bottom-up
   entrepreneurship to go too far in challenging the government's authority.

4. Registration of end-users constitutes the core of the Chinese system of control
   and represents a typical approach to the problem of security within China.

5. Political repression and economic protectionism are often allies in China's
   environment. (Mueller & Tan,1997:94-96)

In fact, the Chinese government responded quickly to the spread of Internet access and its potential damage to Communist control. On January 23, 1996, the State Council passed the "Provisional Directive on the Management of International Connections by Computer Information Networks in the People's Republic of China." The regulations forbid use of the computer networks for activities that might damage the state or harm national security, and for "producing, retrieving, duplicating, and spreading information that may hinder public order, and obscene and pornographic materials." Two weeks later, the Computer Regulation and Supervision Department of the Ministry of Public Security issued a nationwide decree, requesting that all Internet users in China register with the local police within 30 days.

At the end of 1997, the Chinese government worked out a new law to further tighten control over Internet use. Under the law, using the Internet to defame the government, to promote separatist movements, or to leak state secrets, along with hacking and sending pornography on the Net, are subjected to criminal charges (CND-Global,1998b). But Beijing's real motivation is believed to be political, aiming to censor the most democratic, free-wheeling means of communication (CND-Global,1998c).

Authorities have attempted to control Internet usage and access by requiring that all service providers connect through the state-owned ChinaNet. The government's "Great Firewall" is meant to block access to undesirable sites, such as human rights groups and overseas news organizations (ibid.). Any violators can expect to be severely punished. A landmark case came on January 20, 1999, when a Shanghai court sentenced computer businessman Lin Hai to two years in jail for his role in providing an expatriate Chinese dissident group with about 30,000 e-mail addresses of mainland Internet users.

The group admitted that they had used Lin's list to send political news to mainland e-mail boxes (SCMP, 1999).[1]

5.3   Conclusion

As information senders, the online expatriate Chinese student magazines are not yet ready to target the domestic audience back in China, at least at the present stage. This unreadiness manifests itself in both their operating principles and contents. The unreadiness is justified by the fact that though the first online expatriate Chinese student magazine has been in existence for 11 years, as a whole, this new type of media is still in its early stage of development. The high mortality rate shows that except for one or two well-established ones, like FHY and HXWZ, the majority of the student magazines are still struggling for existence. With their current economic and social status abroad, publishers of the media still find it a demanding task to satisfy the needs of merely the expatriate students. It is technically and economically unrealistic for them to extend their readership beyond the expatriate students to include those inside China.

Besides, expatriate Chinese student media are fundamentally different from expatriate Chinese dissident media. The difference lies in the fact that the former are community services that cater to the need of expatriate students to know the latest development back in China. Oppositely, the latter consider it their sole purpose and task to reach and mobilize those at home to overthrow the Communist government. The student media do not share this sense of urgency to reach back home, especially when their general conditions make premature any effort to do so.

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[1] South China Morning Post (SCMP) is a leading English daily in Hong Kong.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that the online expatriate student magazines have no impact at all on those back in China. While serving the community of the expatriate Chinese students, the magazines publish many articles that can also be accessible and influential to people inside China. Mainly taking the forms of analysis and opinions, these articles can attract people inside China with either topics that are never covered in the Communist media or with ideas different from the orthodox values in the country. Moreover, generally speaking, expatriate Chinese students are much better educated than those at home. In addition, they are exposed to the social systems of some of the most advanced countries in the world. Consequently, they can look at China in their articles more objectively, more professionally, and more deeply. These articles provide those inside China with an alternative way of thinking when they look at themselves and the outside world.

Articles of this category can be found easily in the student magazines. For example, In February 1998, HXWZ published an article discussing the Chinese economy. After examining the overall situation of China's economy, the author concluded that a couple of isolated reform measures taken by the Chinese government would not fundamentally improve China's economy. The major obstacle for China's economic development was lack of advanced technology, so it was imperative for the Chinese government to develop the country's national hi-tech industry (Lin,1998). Earlier in the year, the same magazine published a forum article on socialism, capitalism, and communism. Contrary to the ideas popular in mainland China, the author argued that what China was following was not socialism, but a combination of capitalism and political dictatorship. Pure capitalism was not good. It needed to be curbed by a

democratic system. A complete and integrated combination of capitalism and a democratic system pointed to Marx's idea of communism, the author insisted (Yagui, 1998).

On the other hand, with the rapid development of the Internet in China, more and more Chinese start to drive on the information highway as information receivers. Consequently, people inside China can now get access to the online expatriate student magazines. Though it is impossible to give the number or profile of the people who are actually reading these media regularly or irregularly, it is safe to say that these publications do have their readers at home. This conclusion is supported by the fact that, though few and far between, contributions and readers' letters from inside China can still be seen in these student media.[1]

Nevertheless, it needs to be pointed out that impact of these magazines on those inside China may not be as big as some people have expected. There are three reasons for this assumption. First, generally speaking, Internet access, particularly to international sources of information, is still largely a luxury instead of a necessity to the majority of China's huge population due to economic constraints. This privilege is confined to only quite a tiny group of people.

Second, as the Chinese Communist government is trying to create a "great firewall" between China and the rest of the world, even those who are able to get access to the Internet have to take into consideration the political factor and think twice before

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[1] Such a contribution is one story about how a professor was hoodwinked by a street vendor entitled "Cheated in Beijing." It can be found in No. 353, HXWZ, January 2. 1998 at http://www.cnd.org. For a sample of a reader's letter of encouragement from inside China, see Supplement Issue No. 14, FHY, September 20, 1998 at http://www.fhy.net.

they decide to receive sensitive information from abroad. Such a concern is more realistic after the case of Lin Hai.

Third, for those who can get online, the still rather basic online expatriate Chinese student magazines constitute only one of their many options as sources of international information. With Internet time such an expensive luxury, plain-looking sites dealing largely with the experiences of a far-off circle of young emigrants are unlikely to compete effectively with Disney, New York Times, NASA and the many other more high-quality and more comprehensive foreign sites they can visit. As for keeping informed about friends and colleagues abroad, they can do this without eating up Net access time by sending and receiving faxes, placing international telephone calls, reading foreign publications, and talking to their Chinese or non-Chinese overseas contacts.

Chapter 6 Problems, Solutions, Trends, and Future

Over the past 11 years, while online expatriate student magazines have developed

rapidly, some problems have also been noted. Though a specific magazine may have its

own individual problems, some of the problems are shared in common by all the student

publications in the community of expatriate Chinese students. While studying the student

media, I have also noticed some new trends emerging from these publications. In this

chapter, I will first explore some of these common problems. Then I will suggest some

solutions to the problems. I will also devote some space to the trends. Finally, I will

comment on the future of the magazines.

6.1   Problems

Ever since the very beginning, the online expatriate student magazines have been

loaded with problems of various kinds; these problems are most noticeable in the

following aspects.

Working Staff

No matter which model a student magazine follows, lack of working staff is a

problem common to almost all the publications. Notes calling for volunteer editors,

technical support, and Chinese typists can be seen frequently in every magazine. Due to

lack of working staff, some magazines have had to delay regular issues, suspend

operations, or cease publication. Even those that have survived and are operating

successfully are also complaining that their development is constrained by lack of working staff.

Several factors have contributed to such a lack of staff. First, expatriate Chinese students are too busy. They are fighting several wars simultaneously. Being students, they have the common tasks on campus: attend courses, do reading assignments, complete projects, write papers, prepare for presentations, and have examinations. These tasks alone often keep a student busy most of the time. But college education means more. It is a slow process of knowledge accumulation, needing constant investment of time and attention from the learners beyond classes and assigned work. The more and better they wish to learn, the more time they have to spend. The Chinese students are no exception.

Moreover, they are driven by a unique mentality. As a knowledge diaspora community, the majority of the Chinese students understand that only when they excel beyond those around them will they be accepted by their countries of residence. This mentality forces them to spend even more extra hours on their studies. Besides, the Chinese students need time to tackle their foreign language obstacles. Generally speaking, their foreign language skills, especially in oral communication, still leave much room for improvement. As a result, it is common for Chinese students to spend much more time on the same study tasks than their native-speaker classmates.

Finally, they have to work to support themselves. With the current income level in China, it is unrealistic for the students to expect their parents to provide financial aid.[1]

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[1] As shown later in this chapter, some Chinese families are able to sponsor their children's overseas studies now. Nevertheless, these families occupy a very small percentage in the country's overall population.

They have to rely on themselves to survive their college years. To do so, they need time to look for and work at part-time jobs. They cannot afford to waste even a minute, because they fully understand what time means to them: board, rent, and campus fees. As many of them are engaged in physical labour, such as restaurant services, they are often exhausted from work. Even if they have the intention to give the magazines a hand, they rarely have the energy.

The second factor that contributes to the lack of staff comes from the lack of qualified candidates. Running an online magazine needs specialists. Like traditional media, online magazine publication is not something that everybody can do, especially when the publication is supposed to be regular and high-quality. The task asks for a staff who not only know how to write and edit, but also how to handle the technical things such as networks and servers. While candidates familiar with computers are not difficult to find among the students, those who feel comfortable with writing and editing are hard to come by. Deterred by potential employment difficulties, not as many liberal arts students leave China to study aboard. Even if they do, they usually change their majors to the more marketable fields of science, engineering, or business. This reality has left a rather limited source of candidates for the magazines.

Of course, non-liberal arts students can be trained to do the writing and editing as is common with all the magazines now,[1] but the learning curve can be very long and slow. Unlike math formulae, which can be learned and applied overnight, writing and

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[1] For example, most of the staff of the online magazine Xi Xian (XX) are non-liberal arts students. For more information, see "Seeking Contributions." Issue No. 1, April 1995. http://www.sunrisesite.org/gb/magazine/xixian/xx9504.hz

editing skills evolve slowly with the person. In addition, not all the students are ready or even willing to be trained in that direction.

Third, as a whole, there is a weak awareness of voluntarism among the expatriate Chinese students and scholars. Though Chinese culture encourages people to be always ready to help others, voluntarism in its real sense has never become a mode in China [1] mainly because of economic reasons. When many of China's population are still concerned with feeding and clothing themselves, it is unrealistic to expect them to make free contributions to their communities. Born and grown out of such a social environment, the expatriate Chinese students carry this weak awareness of voluntarism with them when they leave their homeland to study abroad. This awareness is weakened further by the busy lives the students find overseas. Consequently, quite a number of them are reading the magazines, but few consider offering voluntary contributions.[2]

Information Sources

While commenting on sources of information for ethnic minority media, one researcher had the following to say:

> **There is also the risk that the newness of information can be exhausted quite quickly in small communities. Much of the information presented to the public may already be known to them. Intellectual ghettoization may promote uninteresting repetition and a definite lack of motivation that in turn can encourage practices that unintentionally lead to the demise of the media. (Riggins, 1992:285)**

Unfortunately, this is what has happened and is still happening to the expatriate

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[1] Except during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) when the Chinese people were practising voluntarism out of political motivation.

[2] Supportive evidence is the repeated calling for volunteers on the magazines.

Chinese student magazines. Quite a portion of the information in the magazines is directly taken from other publications. For example. HXWZ's 1991 issues were composed almost entirely of reprints of previously published articles. Even some devoted readers complained about the practice.[1] As the magazines develop, new sources of information have been explored, but basically speaking, old and published information still play a great role in the operation of the student magazines,[2] because the magazines suffer from a lack of new information.[3]

Getting contributions from their readers is also a shared difficulty for the magazines. Such a lack of materials has had a negative impact on the student publications. For example, to encourage expatriate Chinese students scattered across the world to introduce their places of residence, XX tried to set up a column called "Look at the World," but due to no contributions, the column failed at the very beginning (XX,1995b).

Ironically, while it is a fact that expatriate Chinese students are too busy, another major reason for the lack of submissions is that they see their lives as too dull and void of dynamics. Each day, the students are largely following the apartment–classroom–library/laboratory–job–apartment cycle. Interesting and unexpected things rarely occur. Public events among them are equally rare. Contacts with the mainstream society are seldom due to economic and language constraints. There are simply not too many fresh

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[1] Such a complaint can be found in Issue No. 21, August 23.
http://www.cnd.org/HXWZ/CM91/cm9108d.gb.html
[2] See Chapter 5.
[3] Like calls for volunteers, there are frequent calls for submissions to the magazines. An example can be found in Issue No. 4, January 1996, Xi Xian at
http://www.sunrisesite.org/library/gb/magazine/xixian/xx9601.hz

things for the magazines to report. Such a dull life is unable to provide student writers with enough motivation and enthusiasm for writing. As the editor-in-chief of a student magazine confessed (Lu,Yun 1996), "The days are so dull that I can find no topics to write about. Since I, as editor-in-chief, can write nothing myself, I find it hard to press the others for contributions."

Operating Budget

Compared with the traditional mass media, online publication requires less investment and budget, but this does not mean that online publication needs no money. On the contrary, some equipment and investment is a must if an online magazine wishes to exist and develop. For instance, a large-scale online magazine needs at least its server for publication, distribution, and storage. The importance of the ownership of equipment was not so noticeable in the early days of the magazines, because they were still operating at a small scale. They could share other servers and networks. But as they develop, they need more powerful computers and networks to match their growing operation. Sooner or later, all the magazines are forced to consider purchasing their own equipment. Besides, they have to think about how to pay for their growing fees for using the network.

Being non-profit publications, these magazines are providing free services to the community of the expatriate Chinese students. They depend on free volunteer work for existence. This nature presents the magazines with a severe budget reality, with every magazine complaining it does not have money for its operation.

The usual way for a publication to overcome its financial difficulties is to look for an outside "umbrella" – a sponsor willing to give the money to support the publication.

The advantage of such a sponsorship is obvious. Having a big umbrella overhead to help it protect from rain, the magazine does not need to worry about money matters. Thus, its operation can be stable. But the disadvantage is that the sponsors may try to impose their own values on the publications. As Chapter Three has discussed, this is definitely not what the online expatriate student magazines want to see. Meanwhile, for the student magazines, there remains the question of whether they can find such sponsors at all. As the readership of the student magazines is small, scattered, and poor, these publications lack attraction for advertisers.

Lacking external sources for sponsorship, the online expatriate student magazines look internally. They appeal to their readers for donations.[1] This practice may be helpful to the magazines in the short run. But in the long run, it will not work. First, generally speaking, the expatriate students are far from rich. They cannot be expected to make significant financial contributions,[2] especially when these calls are frequent. Second, as such donations are optional, the results are never guaranteed. The magazines can never tell how much money they will get from the donors. Consequently, they cannot make long-term plans for their publications.

6.2   Solutions

If the online expatriate student magazines wish to develop, they have to overcome their current problems. It is understandable that with their present situations, it is very

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[1] For such an example, please see Appendix 5.

[2] For example, in FHY's 1998 call for donations, the magazine received a total of $9,100 Canadian from 227 donors. While the biggest amount for a single donor was $300 Canadian, the average amount was $40. Considering that FHY is one of the largest and most influential online expatriate Chinese student magazines in the world, it is reasonable to argue that other smaller magazines may be less lucky with their calls for donations. However, actual statistics are not available.

hard for them to do so. But it does not mean that no solutions can be explored. In fact, some solutions do exist.

For example, to tackle the problem of having insufficient articles, the magazines can widen their scope of reporting. For one thing, they may encourage students in various fields to introduce the common knowledge of their scope of studies. Such tasks are beneficial not only to the readers but also to the writers, because they give the authors opportunities to examine their mastery of this knowledge. The magazines could also include more coverage of local events, especially those that have an impact on the students and China. Meaningful discussions can also be an effective way to attract more contributions from the readers.

To build up their financial strength, the magazines can consider commercializing some of their currently free services. For instance, since online matchmaking services are quite popular and productive among the expatriate Chinese students, it is feasible for the providers to charge the posters a reasonable sum. In fact, as some of the well-established magazines have become an integral part in the students' lives and have fairly stable readership, they could consider charging readers some subscription fees. This practice may turn away some of the readers at first, but as long as the magazines produce high-quality contents, they would gradually win back their previously lost readers. The key is quality.

More staff is also possible if the magazines can play up the skill-building benefits of working for these media. Though being a volunteer does not help one earn money, it can help him or her to gain practical skills and experience. In many cases, things like these are what the students are looking for. Many students do not actively respond to the

magazines' calls for volunteers because they do not fully understand the benefits that they can gain from the experience. It is high time that the magazines shift their stress from what the volunteers can give to what they can gain. Moreover, it would be less daunting to potential volunteers if the magazines could delegate responsibilities among various volunteers instead of relying too much on a particular person. This practice would reduce the time and energy burdens on the volunteers. More importantly, it would make working for the magazines an enjoyable experience rather than an unwelcome workload.

6.3   Trends

Over their years of operation, online expatriate student magazines have developed many similarities. Some characteristics, such as affiliation with student organizations and student staff, are closely associated with these magazines. Nevertheless, in recent years. some new trends have emerged in the publications. Though these phenomena may be only an isolated occurrence to a specific magazine or magazines. they may reflect possible changes that are to affect all the other magazines.

From Affiliation to Independence

The majority of the online expatriate student magazines were born as affiliations to the CSSAs or their equivalents. During their development, especially in their early days, these magazines have received support from the student organizations. At the same time, the student media have also helped to promote their supervisory bodies among the student community by reporting on CSSA news or events. Therefore, the two have been beneficial to each other.

Nevertheless, such a previously harmonious relationship seems to be under tension. Some magazines are struggling to break away from their bosses to become independent and boast of it when they do. For example, in his retrospective in 1998 on FHY's five-year history, the magazine's editor-in-chief proudly said, "Though in its early days FHY got some help from the FCSPC, soon it was operating 100 per cent independently to become one of the best loved online Chinese magazines" (Chen, Z.1998).

The process wherein the student organizations are gradually losing loyalty from the magazines reflects the fact that these once influential supervisors are becoming less important to the student media. This change results from two factors. First, most of the student organizations find it hard to get enough budget to keep themselves in effective operation and are involved in their own deteriorating financial difficulties. For instance, in 1992, the national Chinese student organization in Germany got 120,000 marks from donations as its operations budget. Two years later, its budget was reduced to only 30,000 marks due to unproductive calls for donations (Lu,Yi 1995). With such a small budget, the student organization found it hard even to hold its regular congress and it no longer had any ability to continue caring for its subordinate magazine. Gradually, publishers of the student media find that they can run their magazines by themselves without any supervision.

Second, even putting aside the budget difficulty, the student organizations can play very limited roles among the students now. They cannot do as much as they once could to promote the interests of the Chinese students abroad. Expatriate Chinese student organizations are a historical product. They came into being along with the "6.4" student

movement inside China in 1989. Because of their need to struggle for common political and personal interests both at home and abroad,[1] the expatriate students formed their own organizations. With clear-cut goals as well as widespread participation and support from the students, the organizations were very successful in promoting the student community in those eventful days.

But as this student movement fades away, the student organizations lose their appeal to the students. Also, most of the newcomers in the community after 1989 are more indifferent to the 1989 student movement. Students now in their mid-20s were barely teenagers at that time. They are less interested in any political or non-political activities sponsored by the student organizations.[2] Meanwhile, changes in immigration policies in some of the Western countries have made it more difficult for the expatriate Chinese students to struggle for their own personal benefits abroad. With such a changed situation, the students really doubt what these organizations can do for them today. They view the present role of the student organizations as only sponsoring dance parties, airing films, and providing entertainment. Some students even suggest that these organization should be dissolved (Lu,Yi 1995).

Staff: from Students to Professionals

As online student media, the expatriate magazines have been run mainly by expatriate Chinese students themselves. One of the indicators is the dominant percentage of students involved in the operation of the magazines, such as editing, writing, publishing, and technical support. The advantage of having students as staff is that being

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[1] Such as supporting China's domestic student movement and struggling for permanent residence abroad.
[2] For such an example, see Appendix 6.

rooted in the readership, these student staff know well what their student readers would expect from the magazines. As a result, these staff can orient the magazines to the needs of the student readers.

Nevertheless, recent years have seen a steady decrease in student involvement in the operation of some magazines. This trend is more noticeable in a few well-established publications. For example, in March 1989, all CND's core staff members were students. In late 1989, there were just two or three. As time has gone by, the composition of the membership has changed greatly, shifting from students to professionals. In 1998, just two or three students involved in the core membership (CND,1998).

It is important to be clear that these professionals are actually the very students who began the magazines. They have simply now completed their education and entered careers. With the lack of new student volunteers, many of the original staff have stayed with the magazines to keep them going. These professionals enjoy an edge over students in at least two aspects. First, the professionals are in a better economic position. Unlike students, they have secured work and sources of income. Quite a number of them have their own cars and houses. They do not have the financial worries that most students have. Consequently, they have more spare time and energy for the magazines.

Second, the professionals are more experienced. Since these people used to be students themselves, they are experienced in dealing with those on campus. More importantly, as most of them are generally older than the current students, they have more and deeper insight into issues supposed to be suitable for the coverage of the magazines. Besides, they are more socially experienced in both China and their countries of residence. This experience enables them to feel comfortable with both the Chinese and

foreign cultures. Also, it helps them to broaden the horizon of the magazines by integrating different cultures. As a result, they can usually make the publications more informative, analytical and attractive.

Yet, the major concern with the increasing involvement of professionals in the student magazines is the issue of elitism. People may ask, "As student staff graduate and become professionals, who will be represented in the magazines -- the students or the professionals?" Though articles responsive to the elite professional segment are not yet dominant in the magazines, they can be found from time to time. An indicator is the popularity of articles on tips about house purchases and stock investment. Obviously, these topics are beyond the interest of students who are still concerned about food and clothing.

6.4   Future

Let us imagine what would happen to the expatriate Chinese students without these online student media.

First, they would have neither effective media for communication among themselves and with the outside world nor outlets for personal feelings.

Second, they would remain isolated individuals instead of a united community. Their voices could never be heard in the world and it would be far more difficult for them to protect their rights.

Third, they would lose many sources of information about their community, their homeland, and the world. They would have to depend totally on coverage by either the

Communist news media in China or the mainstream media in the countries of their residence for information, which is often both inadequate and biased.

The list can go longer. But the point is that online expatriate student magazines have become an integral part in the lives of the expatriate Chinese students. They cannot afford to lose them once they have got them and benefited from them.

Nevertheless, some discouraging trends do exist in the field. For instance, in the early 1990s, there were at least half a dozen online expatriate student magazines in Canada alone. But today because of a merging of the previous small magazines into much stronger publications, only two are still operating. People cannot help asking with concern, "Will the online expatriate student magazines keep on prospering?"

The answer is yes, because the factors that have contributed to the birth and development of these magazines remain unchanged. In fact, some of them have become more favourable.

First, the expatriate Chinese student community will go on growing. To many Chinese youth, going abroad for studies remains an attractive dream. Many university students in China still wish to go abroad to get a higher degree. They believe overseas studies will not only help them master a foreign language, but also widen their horizons (Lu & Ruo & Chen,1999). Beyond this, many are seeking to create new lives abroad. Such a trend was felt in an international education exhibition held in Beijing on March 13, 1999. Though not widely publicized in the media, the exhibition still attracted an impressive number of people from across China. Representatives from all the 16 participating countries in the exhibition, including the United States, Canada, France and Britain, were surprised at the high attendance. "There are too many people" was their

common impression. A major national Chinese daily commented, "The capital feels the waves of overseas studies" (ibid.). Such a strong enthusiasm for overseas study can also been seen in other cities in China, such as Shanghai (SPBS, 1999) and Shenzhen (Li, G.1999).

While those eager for overseas study used to be dominated by university graduates who sought to go abroad through state sponsorship or financial aid from foreign schools, a new trend is emerging. A growing number of high school graduates have gone abroad for study at the undergraduate level at their own expense. In some places, high school graduates have replaced university graduates to become the dominant group of people for overseas study. For instance, in China's southern coastal city of Shenzhen, 70 to 80 per cent of the people who had gone abroad for study in the first four months in 1999 were high school graduates (ibid.). The major reason for such a trend is the fact that more and more Chinese families have become economically able to sponsor their children's study abroad. This new trend will give more momentum to the already strong wave of overseas study and send even more young people abroad.

Second, there will remain a great demand for information and communication among these expatriate Chinese students. Such a demand arises from three aspects. First, as China's reforms become more profound and complex, Chinese students overseas are more concerned about what is happening inside their homeland, especially to their family members. No matter where they are, they are still deeply rooted in China. Second, as more young people arrive abroad for studies, they will need these magazines to understand the countries of their residence and orient their lives to the new environments. In fact, it will be a natural choice for the newcomers to turn to these student magazines,

because on the one hand, almost no alternative sources of help exist, and on the other hand, these magazines are closer to them as they are run for students or former students by students. Third, as expatriate Chinese students continue to be scattered across the world, there remains a need for them to communicate with their peers in the community.

Next, online media will remain a dominant way of information collection and communication for the expatriate Chinese students. At least at present and in the near future, it seems that no alternative media can have the technical edge to replace the online media to serve such a widely scattered and economically disadvantaged community as the expatriate Chinese students. Meanwhile, the Chinese students will continue to be heavily concentrated in high-tech fields, and have easy access to the Internet.

Fourth, the technical advances in the computer networks, especially in the steady progress in the application of the Internet technologies in Chinese, have greatly facilitated the operation of online Chinese media. This, in turn, will help these media to improve in quality and consequently attract more readers.

Finally, the online expatriate Chinese student magazines have become more mature as their operators and editors gain experience and lessons from their practice in the past years. They know better now how to make their media sustain steady development by avoiding shortcomings and bringing into full play their strong points. The merging of LYTX and FHY in Canada is just one example.

Nevertheless, it is naïve to think that online expatriate Chinese student magazines will pop up widely across the world in the future. This is neither necessary nor possible, because the overall socio-economic conditions for the expatriate Chinese students will remain basically unchanged in the near future.

The realistic prospects for these student media are that they will keep developing, but in a more controlled way. They will focus more on upgrading quality than on increasing quantity. In other words, unless something radical happens, similar to the Tiananmen Square Incident in 1989, it is not likely that there will be a drastic change in their current status. But it is beyond doubt that their operation will improve steadily, both technically and non-technically. As a result, it can be expected that they will have bigger impact on the expatriate Chinese students themselves, and those inside China.

Conclusion

As I said earlier in the Introduction to this paper, I started studying the online expatriate Chinese student magazines with a couple of questions in mind: "Why are there these magazines?" "Why are they online, not printed magazines?" "Who is running these magazines?" "What do they aim to do with these magazines?" and "What new forms of community and immigrant or expatriate experience might they foster?" Having examined these magazines at both the macro level of overall social conditions that spawned them, and the micro level of the journalistic practice of the individual magazines, I think I have found the answers to these questions.

First, the birth of the first online expatriate student magazine may seem quite accidental, yet the emergence of these magazines as a whole was natural and unavoidable. The online magazines were born to meet the needs of the expatriate Chinese students. The expansion of global capitalism has brought about global mobility of people. Consequently, more and more expatriate Chinese students are seen across the world. As the students increase in number, they find a growing potential for communication with their homeland and among themselves. Nevertheless, there is a gap between the students and the media around them. On the one hand, the mainstream media in their host countries largely ignore this special group of people and are often accused of being biased in their coverage of China-related topics. On the other hand, the existing Chinese community media abroad are not catering to the needs of the expatriate students due to their strong Hong Kong or Taiwan backgrounds, obvious political orientations, and

different language styles. Therefore, the expatriate Chinese students have only one option — to run their own publications. This very need has given birth to the online magazines.

Second, the decision that the expatriate Chinese students have made to run online magazines instead of traditional printed media such as newspapers and magazines is not arbitrary. The decision is based on the collective identity and the nature of knowledge diaspora of the expatriate Chinese students. Among the collective identity of the students, two things are outstanding: they are widely scattered across the world, and they are economically disadvantaged. These two traits have made the traditional printed media an impractical and ineffective means of communication for the students. On the other hand, easy access to a dispersed audience and cheap cost are the very strengths of the online media.

Online magazines are not only suitable in theory but also workable in practice for the expatriate Chinese students. As a knowledge diaspora, the students have access to the Internet. Moreover, they possess the skills for modern telecommunications. Therefore, it is quite natural for the students to turn to a type of media that brings their strengths into full play yet avoids their shortcomings.

Third, unlike commercial media, online Chinese expatriate student magazines are exclusively run by volunteer students or students-turned-professionals themselves. The magazines are of the students, by the students and for the students. This nature is first determined by the disadvantaged social status of the expatriate Chinese students in their host countries. Because of their low profile in the mainstream society, the expatriate Chinese students are not getting enough attention from those outside their own community. Many people in the mainstream society do not even fully realize the

existence of this special group, let alone wish to do something for it. As a result, there is nobody to come to the aid of the students. The students have to rely on themselves. The nature of being magazines run by the students themselves is also determined by the disadvantaged economic conditions of the expatriate Chinese students. Because the students are poor, no commercial publishers are willing to invest their money in something that is doomed to reap no profit.

Though generally speaking, the magazines are all run by students, the student publishers are seen in several different categories: independent, semi-official, and official. They are also running the magazines at different levels: local, regional, and national. As Chapter 4 has discussed, a couple of factors have played critical roles in determining how the student publishers run the magazines, including such things as the number of Chinese students, degree of community awareness, readiness of volunteer staff, effectiveness of student organizations, and last but not least the availability of technical support.

Fourth, the online expatriate Chinese student magazines aim to build up a strong community among the Chinese students abroad. Because of their disadvantaged conditions both socially and economically, expatriate ethnic migrants usually fail to get necessary attention and fair treatment in the countries of their residence. Therefore, they have a strong tendency toward seeking a powerful community of their own to assert their identity. This need is more obvious and urgent among the Chinese students abroad because of the striking contrast between their high level of education and low social and economic status. The online expatriate student magazines are making use of the general mentality of the students to get as many individual students as possible to form a common community.

In practice, they are doing so through every possible means, especially by mobilizing among the students Chinese culture, national identity, and community awareness. These strategies have been proven effective because they overcome the different political and personal backgrounds among the students to focus on the fundamental shared values of being Chinese. As a result, the magazines are quite successful in achieving their goals of establishing such a community.

Finally, online expatriate student magazines are fostering new community experience among the students. Throughout history, traditional media such as printed newspapers and magazines have played a critical role in helping form communities among expatriate ethnic groups. These people have long experienced a community as physical and materialistic. They have been accustomed to face-to-face communication among community members. But thanks to the Internet, online expatriate student magazines are completely changing this conventional community experience. They are fostering a virtual community, which is free from time and space constraints and is borderless. Matching the collective identity of the expatriate Chinese students, this new community experience has greatly facilitated the communication among the expatriate Chinese students and enhanced the construction of their community.

The case of the online expatriate Chinese student magazines is significant in journalism. First of all, they have greatly enriched ethnic media with a completely new type of publications. Though online media are not something new in mainstream journalism, they are still seldom seen among expatriate ethnic populations. Ethnic media are still predominantly printed and locally oriented. So far, almost no literature has shown large-scale and organized practising of online publishing among expatriate ethnic groups.

Therefore, the expatriate Chinese students' experience with these magazines is pioneering. These magazines are pointing to a new direction for ethnic media and providing a new pattern of journalistic operation to other socially and economically disadvantaged expatriate ethnic communities. They are fostering a new conception of ethnic media among both ethnic and mainstream populations.

Online expatriate Chinese student magazines are also offering valuable experience to those ethnic communities interested in online publishing. As globalization expands, it can be expected that expatriate ethnic communities will be more and more geographically dispersed. Consequently, it will become increasingly difficult for the community members to communicate among themselves. Naturally, more ethnic groups will be interested in online media. The case of these online expatriate student magazines gives others something to think about, modify, and follow so that they can avoid many pitfalls in their own practice.

Most importantly, the case of these online expatriate student magazines is changing the relationship between news media and their audience from being outward to inward. Traditionally, news media have looked outward to reach their targeted audience. The relationship between the media and their audience was thus two-poled, with the media at one end, and the audience at the other. For instance, when a newspaper publishes a letter-to-the-editor from a reader for argument on a certain topic, there is actually an exchange of opinions between the reader and the newspaper. But the online expatriate student magazines are more inward than outward. Instead of being a source broadcasting out to the community population, the online magazines form a virtual place

that gathers in broadly dispersed community members. They are trying to blur the line of distinction between themselves and their readers.

It is true that traditional media in some cases also form sorts of meeting places, but like temporal meeting places such as teahouses and parks, these "places" are physically limited. In order to meet other people, one has to be physically within the medium's distribution radius. This nature confines the resulting community to only local participants. Also traditional media are strongly influenced by different interest groups as they are dependent on financial aid from these groups. Consequently, these media can become more or less a mouthpiece of these groups. This practice has resulted in political constraints on interaction between the media and their audiences and among the audience members themselves.

Online expatriate student magazines are less constrained by spatial and political factors, because they are instantly accessible worldwide and less dependent on outside financial resources. Moreover, they aim more at attracting their audience inward to form a virtual community than at reaching out to bombard the audience with information. Consequently, as a gathering place, these magazines get to fulfil a range of social functions beyond those informational functions conventionally associated with traditional media. In particular, these magazines are providing the expatriate Chinese students a virtually unconstrained space to fully express their opinions. Unlike the temporal Chinese media, these online periodicals are less politically oriented in their operation. They allow opinion forums to be more dynamic by adopting a pluralism that encourages everyone to add his or her voice.

My analysis of the case of online expatriate Chinese student magazines provides not only a documentation of this specific form of media, but also a benchmark example against which the future emergence of online media within diasporic communities can be evaluated. In light of the case of these online expatriate magazines, we can compare how online magazines could be involved in meeting the needs of other expatriate groups with specific profiles. For instance, the current Kosovo crisis has produced a major diaspora of Kosovo Albanians whose exile may last a considerable time. It will be interesting to observe the role, if any, online media play in their diasporic experience. In particular, we will find it tempting to ask such questions as "Will they go online?" "If so, how quickly?" "For what purpose will they go online -- political mobilization or military mobilization?" "How will they go online, by relying on themselves or outside helpers?" and "If they need outside helpers, who will come to their aid and how will that influence the product that emerges and the community's relationship to it?"

Answers to these questions will reveal how the Kosovo Albanian diaspora will respond to attempts at online media. More significantly, these answers can be used to test the applicability of the experience of online expatriate Chinese student magazines to other expatriate ethnic groups. Thus we can answer some of the basic questions concerning ethnic online media. For instance, by comparing the experiences of the Kosovo Albanian diaspora and the expatriate Chinese students in their efforts to run online publications, we can know whether it is technical factors or the expatriate experience that contributes to the birth of online media in an expatriate ethnic population.

Ethnic minority journalism is quite an unexplored subject. Online expatriate ethnic journalism is an even more pioneering topic. Much remains to be done to fully

understand the mechanisms within this new type of media. Nevertheless, the case of

online expatriate Chinese student magazines is a good starting point that provides

valuable insights into the subject.

Appendices

Appendix 1

As noted on page 9, common features of a diaspora include:

1. Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions;
2. alternatively, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions;
3. a collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history and achievements;
4. an idealization of the putative ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation;
5. the development of a return movement that gains collective approbation;
6. a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate;
7. a troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance at the least or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group;
8. a sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement; and
9. the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism.

Source: Cohen, Robin (1997:26). *Global Diasporas: An Introduction.* Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press

Appendix 2

Partially shown on pages 63-64, the following is a more detailed translated excerpt of the original appeal:

Friends, Compatriots,

On July 14, with the connivance of the Japanese government, the "Japanese Youth Association" once again erected a light tower on Diao Yu Tai islands. On the 20th of the same month, the Japanese government announced establishment of its 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone, which includes Chinese territory Diao Yu Tai islands. All these have challenged China's territory sovereignty.

...Having long reflected on the fact that the generosity of the Chinese government and people in treating the Japanese people with good for their evils and that the good will of the Chinese government and people for no more wars between the two countries has been repeatedly made use of by the Japanese revived militarists, we can no longer remain silent. We would utter our roars in defence of Diao Yu Tai and keep the holy territory of our motherland from being infringed on.

Twenty-five years ago, our predecessors -- students and scholars from Taiwan -- unfolded the "Defend Diao Yu Tai" movement on a magnificent scale in North America. Their heroic spirit greatly deterred the Japanese ambition for our territory and boosted the patriotism of all the Chinese around the world.

Today, just before the "9.18" anniversary,* it is high time for the present generation of us students to take over the banners from our predecessors and roar out. We have not forgotten the song that encouraged the Chinese people to "brave the enemy's guns" and "get united" to fight against the Japanese – "... everyone is forced to utter his last roar. Rise up! Rise up! Rise up!"

Friends, compatriots across the Taiwan Strait and around the world, let us get united in action.

On September 18, FCSPC and <u>FHY</u> will present letters of protest to the Japanese embassy and consulates in Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal. Therefore, we are seeking signatures and inviting you to join us.

Chinese scholar and student friends in Canada, please sign your names!

Readers of <u>FHY</u> across the world, please sign your names!

Our signatures will form waves and seas against invasion and in favour of peace.

* refers to the seizure of China's northeastern city of Shenyang in 1931 by the Japanese invaders, as a step towards their occupation of the entire Northeast.

Appendix 3

As discussed on page 75, online expatriate Chinese student magazines exploited NATO's bombing of China's embassy in Belgrade to mobilize national identity among expatriate Chinese students. The following is the Table of Contents of HXWZ's special edition during the period:

Hua Xia Wen Zhai Zeng Kan

(Supplement to CND Chinese Magazine)
Special Issue #178 (1)

"NATO Bombing of Chinese Embassy Special Issue"

May 11, 1999

ISSN 1021-8602

Table of Contents (zk9905b1)
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1. The World Stage: NATO Missiles Hit Chinese Embassy
U. N. Security Council Holds Emergency Meeting
NATO, U.S. Low-Key on the Incident
U.S., NATO Apologize
U.S. to Close Embassy in Beijing Temporarily
Official Statement by U.S.
Chinese Foreign Minister Protests Against U.S.

2. Latest Developments: JIANG Zemin, ZHU Rongji Meet Russian Envoy
Yeltsin Calls JIANG Zemin on Hotline

3. Official Responses: China Makes Official Statement, Calls Back
Ambassador from U.S.
Deputy Chairman HU Jintao Makes Speech on TV
Chinese Expert Questions "Mistake"
Chinese Investigation Team Sent to Yugoslavia
Xinhua Agency and Guangming Daily Make Strong

Protest Over Death of Reporters

4. Protest & Demonstrations: 30,000 in Guangzhou Protest Over Night
Beijing Students Throw Rocks at U.S. Embassy
China's Demonstration Largest Since 1989
A Witness at U.S. Embassy on May 9
American Fast-food Chains Close Down in
    Nanjing
American Movies Stopped Showing in
    Guangdong
Protest on the Net: Hackers in Action

Appendix 3 (Continued)

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Hua Xia Wen Zhai Zeng Kan

(Supplement to CND Chinese Magazine)
Special Issue #178 (2)

"NATO Bombing of Chinese Embassy Special Issue"

May 11, 1999

ISSN 1021-8602

Table of Contents (zk9905b2)

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Appendix 4

Taken from Hong Kong-based English daily <u>South China Morning Post</u>, online edition, April 9, 1999 (http://www.scmp.com), the following news report provides some background insights into my discussion about poverty in China on page 107:

Plans to eradicate poverty in danger

DANIEL KWAN and Agence France-Presse

The Government is in danger of missing its target of wiping out poverty by the end of next year.

Officials were quoted yesterday as saying at least half of China's poor still lived in "abject poverty". lacking even the basic resources to survive.

By the end of 1997, there were about 50 million people living in poverty, they said. No updated figures were available.

The Government defines poverty as an annual per capita income of under 640 yuan (HK$595).

Zhang Lei, deputy director of the State Council's Leading Group Office on Poverty Alleviation and Development, said time was running out to meet the target.

The deputy director's remarks were made at an anti-poverty workshop in Beijing on Wednesday.

Other speakers said women accounted for more than half of the poverty-stricken population and more than 92 per cent of the poor lived in central and western provinces.

"More women are mired in poverty than men and they find it more difficult to shake off the shackles of destitution," China Daily quoted Shen Shuji, vice-chairwoman of the All-China Women's Federation, as saying.

Zhou Qijiang, an agriculture technology director, told the

workshop: "Women themselves cannot be solely responsible for improving their lot.

"Governmental and non-governmental assistance is desperately needed."

The high level of illiteracy among women in rural areas - 25 million between the ages of 15 and 40 - had prevented many from taking part in, and therefore enjoying the benefits of, economic reforms, he said.

Mr Zhang was quoted as saying that some areas in central and western provinces of the country were so poor that even basic living conditions were lacking.

There were more than 20 million people in 592 counties who had to fight for their lives every day because of a lack of water, he said.

He admitted that due to dire conditions in these provinces, 10 per cent of families who had received help to shake off poverty risked renewed destitution when natural calamities struck.

In order to meet the Government's goal, Beijing has decreed that senior officials will be held personally responsible for anti-poverty programmes, hoping that would put pressure on leading cadres to speed up their implementation.

Appendix 5

The following unedited call-for-help note from CND illustrates my discussion about the efforts of online expatriate Chinese student magazines to seek donations from their readers. The message can also be found at http://www.cnd.org/CNDneedHelp.html. All the spelling and grammar mistakes are from the original English message. The message also shows the students' English language skills.

CND Calls for YOUR Help

-- A Message from the CND Editor-in-Chief

Dear CND Reader,

One of my least favorite jobs as Manager of China News Digest (CND) is to solicit donations. But, having said that, I need you to make a contribution right now. If you enjoy and rely on CND's no-holes-barred (*sic*), unbiased, and non-aligned news and features on all things Chinese -- you must express your support now in the form of a fully tax deductible donation. If you use CND services on a regular basis, we suggest you make a donation of US$20 or more annually to CND, PO Box 10111, Gaithersburg, MD 20898, USA. Your generosity will enable us to do regular maintenance/upgrade of the CND servers and network connections and hence keep the free services going.

The CND web servers often saturate their network connections, especially on Fridays when new issues of HXWZ are published. Currently the servers are Sparc 20 and Sparc 2 clones that do not allow much room for capacity increase. CND is one of the most visited web sites, loaded with huge of amount of quality news and information archive contents. We believe that once we have more network connection bandwidth and more powerful computers, we can serve you much better with much faster information retrieval from our web site.

CND is also seeking corporate sponsors for its news feature pages and, of course, its premier Chinese magazine, HXWZ. In recognition of your company's support of a selected feature or column, we will place your web banner ad on that page and identify your company as its sponsor. If your firm would like to explore this option, please contact my colleague Wei LIN at banners@cnd.org. Or if you know of a company that might benefit from sponsoring CND, we would very much appreciate it if you introduce CND to that company.

In anticipation of your kind and generous donation, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. As you consider my plea, please remember we are strictly not-for-profit, we are here because you want CND's publications and archives.

Sincerely,

Bo XIONG, Manager and Editor-in-Chief
China News Digest

Appendix 6

The following is an unedited message from CSSFA-L@listserv.okstate.edu, an online discussion group by Chinese students at Oklahoma State University (OSU). Supporting my observation on page 125 that expatriate Chinese students are now less interested in any political or non-political activities sponsored by the student organizations, the author comments on the reluctance of the Chinese students at OSU to get involved in student activities organized by the school and the Chinese student organization on campus. All spelling and grammar mistakes are from the original English message. This message also shows the English language level of the expatriate Chinese students.

Date: Tue, 30 Mar 1999 10:05:49 -0500
Reply-To: Discussion for Chinese Student & Scholar Friendship Association <CSSFA-
             L@listserv.okstate.edu>
From: XUDONG YANG <yangx@okstate.edu>
Subject: We cannot go on like this forever!
To: CSSFA-L@listserv.okstate.edu

--------------------- Information from the mail header ----------------------
Sender: Discussion for Chinese Student & Scholar Friendship Association
             <CSSFA-L@LISTSERV.OKSTATE.EDU>
Poster: XUDONG YANG <yangx@OKSTATE.EDU>
Subject: We cannot go on like this forever!

Dear Chinese Fellow Students:

I am sorry to bother you again, but I really want to criticize
something and bring it to your attention. The following is an article
I wrote last night after we attended the Cultural Night. If there is
anything that hurts you too much, let me apologize first. However,
my intention is always positive and some of my words, I believe, do
make sense. Thank you.

_____

The curtain dropped slowly with the shouts, applauds, whistles, glories,
victories, triumph and so on. It seems that everyone in the theater was
excited and happy. Me, too. Happy and excited. I did enjoy the
Cultural Night. However, unfortunately, my feelings are much more

complicated than just that.

It was such a great opportunity to demonstrate our brilliant history and culture and thus to improve our overall public goodwill and image. But why couldn't we see our country's name on the performance list? And why couldn't we see as many Chinese audiences as other national audiences? Are we short of talented people or funds? Are we short of student population? Are most of us so poor that we cannot even afford a ticket of $5? Or are most of us were too busy to squeeze two hours even as a weekend break? Too many questions and doubts full of my mind.

Therefore, I cannot help but think of our overseas Chinese community, especially at OSU. It is a well-known fact that our Chinese (Mainland, China here) is the third largest international population on campus with Malaysian and Indian being the first two, respectively. If counted from the Greater China perspective, we are certainly No. 1 here with Chinese from other parts of the world. However, our tonight's performance, that is, no show-up at all in such an important occasion with even a few audience really surprised and in effect hurt me and some other Chinese audience too very much.

Sorry. I have to be totally frank to you about some matters that really should have been addressed long time ago. The topic this time is MANY CHINESE STUDENTS ARE OF POOR QUALITY IN SOME IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF LIFE, WHICH ARE STRONGLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO OUR DESEASED CULTURE AND SOCIETY.

I am not talking about people in Mainland, China, but people here who are considered very well-educated and thus high-quality Chinese students studying in America. How many of us are really concerned with our own rights and benefits, such as, our Chinese association, our various activities, our mutual assistance, our public image? How many of us have ever physically done something for our community? How many of us are very enthusiastic and supportive to our own organization and the like? How many of us have ever provided even ideas, suggestions, and recommendation if needed? Or even how many of us have constantly attended our own activities at least to just show support? There are dozens of ways that we can make contributions to our community and nation, but how many of us really have done something positively?

A few more things to refresh our memory. First of all, nobody from our community is a current member of the OSU Intl Student Association. Even worse, nobody seemed to be willing to run for the president of our own association of this year. Then we had to counsel and look for over

and over among the newcomers by the previous president. Maybe, nobody wanted this irritating and no-good job. I understand! To think our position in the Intl Association was once in jeopardy because of lack of sufficient member to serve. Gladly, Zhan Keqin stood out of the crowd and said Yes, Id like to take this responsibility. Good, our organization was saved this way! But in contrast, India has three members serving on the intl committee. Can you imagine how much benefits they have gained, visible and invisible, and how much we have lost? Sixty of Indian students appeared on the stage tonight with the top leaders of OSU including President Halligan and a huge number of audience present, and they won the second place. Indonesia, a country that still despises and persecutes Chinese and our descendants, grabbed the championship. I am not trying to stir up any racial conflicts between Chinese and XYZ, but cant you see the potential impact on such great occasion? The ironical thing is that most of performers from both Indonesia and Malaysia teams were Chinese too. Why cant mainland Chinese take an initiative to show what beauty and strengths we possess?

Remember, even Turkey has a president on the committee? They offered a program too.

Secondly, almost nobody really did something to defend our own country and nation when thousands of rumors and prejudges were prevalent on campus (Only Zhang Yue did once, if memory serves.) until Chris Chase, a friendly and objective American, came out and spoke for us. Isnt (*sic*) this sad to say and to experience? Three hundred students from Mainland, China, are here.

Because of the time restriction, the last question is what do you think our community's image in the publics eyes? Just recently we celebrated the Chinese New Year this February. Unfortunately, the O'Collegian only put a small photo about it without nearly no description. I am sure you know what if it had been some other countries major international festivals. (Even CBS reported some Chinese celebration nationwide, and many American and international students knew this festival well already.) Another shocking example could be that on the campus newspaper of the next day of this years Cultural Expo was a big photo of a Japanese student who was concentrating on Japanese calligraphy (Shu Fa). Oh, Lord! The Mainland Chinese and Taiwan Chinese also had the same item on show, but why couldn't we get the public attention and exposure? Is Chinese calligraphy from Japan, or that young Japanese girl wrote better than people from both sides of the strait. (Personally, I know Wan Hong, a MBA guy, had very impressive handwriting. He was there enthusiastically.)

I know my comments would hurt some fellow students, yet I cannot
swallow them up. Truth is truth, though often cruel--Many Chinese
students are very selfish, short-sighted, not diligent enough, and lack
of the awareness of collectiveness (or community). They only care about
themselves and their personal things, e.g., homework, programming, term
projects, experiments, work, exams, jobs, family, etc. They don't see
thing farther. They are slow and indifferent in public activities.
They are not aware of the importance of being part of a strong
community Unfortunately, all the above symptoms originate from our
diseased culture and current situation. Culturally, we have been taught
to be good students only and that's it. As the ancient saying goes,
You are selected to be a Chinese gentleman if your studies are
excellent! (*Xue Er You Ze Shi*) and Books have everything you
dream about, for example, gold house and precious stones meaning
wonderful futures. Our current college selection system is a perfect
reflection of this ancient proverb, i.e., the entrance exams first and
only. There are no GPA, no recommendations, no community service
experiences, no extracurricular activities, and no leadership record
requirements. What also needs mentioning, thanks to the shocking
tragedies of the Cultural Revolution plus the negative impacts of
economic reform, many positive parts of our culture have faded and
even been destroyed with those dark sides becoming darker and darker.
In some peoples words, the current Chinese society is even more
capital than Americas where the majority of citizens are hunger for
physical benefits without the consideration of the morality and
legality. The bad thing is that we are all from that society and the
bad influences are too obvious.

Maybe, some think that, if they don't do supportive things, some others
will do. However, if you think so, why cant them? Everybody is
selfish and lazy by human nature. Others may be expecting you to do the
same thing. On the other hand, it is everybody's community that also
significantly determines your future. Just a few peoples contribution
is far from enough for the big family. A single flowers blossom is
not really spring. Spring only comes when hundreds of flowers are in
full blossom at the same time. Furthermore, if you slack off, you
naturally set up a bad example for others to follow and more people
might fall into this unhealthy tendency. Many people could have known
the fact that if a professor or department favors a few students from a
certain country, later on, he/she or it would tend to award GA to
newcomers from the same university or country. Most companies are doing
exactly the same
thing when recruiting college graduates. For instance, if American
Airline was impressed by the first group of Chinese students

comprehensive performances, it would naturally come to OSU again for further recruiting and vice versa. From time to time, some American companies are curious about my extracurricular records on campus too. Corporate world does not like to hire bookworms that have little sense of community the company as a whole, and little social experience. Just a joke, in many Americans eyes, we Asian seem to be no difference, which contains multiple meanings. It is up to us to improve our overall image and thus to differentiate us from others. This long-term process does not only have to do with you and me, but also to do with our children if you plan to stay here for long. Keep it in mind that America is a country different from China in that people depends more on credits and networks (recommendations).

Action speaks louder than words. We are all members of the bigger community. Thus, it does matter if it is strong or the opposite and it also does make difference if everyone takes good initiative, at least a significant percentage of people here. If you really care about your own country, people, and your and your younger generations future, do something to show your love and support! Many thanks for your time and attention!

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