

## FEATURE

## Ching-Chih Chen Leads Computer Tour of China

By MARK F. HALL  
Copyright Cataloging

Using her own multimedia CD-ROM package, *The First Emperor of China*, Ching-Chih Chen took her audience on a guided tour of China, its history, and Chinese scholarship—all in a matter of minutes on a computer monitor.

Chen, professor and associate dean of the Graduate School of Library School and Information Science at Simmons College in Boston, gave the audience in the Mumford Room on April 4 a glimpse of the future of information technology. Chen's presentation, "World Culture and Heritage in the Coming Digital Environment: From 'The First Emperor of China' to the Global Digital Library," provided a demonstration of the possibilities created by new technologies such as CD-ROMs and the "Information Superhighway" (a phrase that Chen said is overused).

Focusing primarily on the history of imperial China and the archeological record of its first emperor, Qin Shi Huang Di, the package allows the user to access information—text, photos, motion pictures, maps, interviews—all at the click of a mouse button. For her demonstration, Chen began with the table of contents, which showed the general topics covered by the package. By clicking through various on-screen menus she was able to bring up biographical information on Qin Shi Huang Di, photographs of archeological sites and relics, and even a motion picture tour of the Great Wall of China. By retrieving a map of China and clicking the cursor over a specific region, she was able to bring up a detailed map of that

region. Chen said that she would have liked to have shown the guided tour of the museum contained on the disc, but that would have required too much time. She also teased the audience with glimpses of other attractions contained on the disc, such as interviews with scholars (available with both English and Chinese soundtracks), a menu of all the Chinese dynasties, and more.

Chen began work on "The First Emperor of China" during the mid-1980s, traveling to China with seven crew members and more than 2,000 pounds of equipment. Chen said she was not an expert on the Chinese emperor when she arrived. What she knew of the subject at the time, she said, would have allowed her to talk with a real expert "for about ten minutes." Spending the first six of nine months learning about her subject matter, she and her associates eventually collected 256,000 frames of images which she originally published in sequential order on two videodiscs. "Multiple quantum leaps" in technology have allowed this information, along with 60 hours (80 on the scholarly version) of interviews, footage and narration, to be fully indexed and available in a single CD-ROM package, which *MacUser* magazine called "one of the 50 best" multimedia packages on the market.

The emphasis of Chen's demonstration was not on her CD-ROM itself, however, but rather on the possibilities created by the technology it uses. "The First Emperor of China" was merely an example of the kind of information retrieval technology that Chen says will shape the future role of libraries as "dynamic information centers." She spoke

enthusiastically of the "digital and visual information age," leading to the Global Digital Library, a network of the world's leading libraries connected by a digital network such as the World Wide Web, providing access to their collections through a series of menus such as those in her own CD-ROM package. Indeed, projects such as the Library's early American Memory prototype and the National Digital Library Program here at the Library of Congress are among the first steps toward this Global Digital Library, which already contains collected information from the national libraries of 35 countries.

According to Chen, at the present time the chief obstacle to the realization of the full potential of the Global Digital Library is the difficulty in managing intellectual property. Current national and international copyright and intellectual property laws are overwhelmed by the challenge of managing the tremendous amount of information that the Information Superhighway is capable of transmitting. The ease with which information may be downloaded from online sources makes it unlikely that the full potential of the Global Digital Library or any similar venture will be realized until a method is found to protect the rights of authors from unauthorized use.

In addition to her position at Simmons College, Chen has contributed greatly to the international activities of many professional organizations. She has been active in different roles on committees/subcommittees of the American Library Association and the American Society for Information Science related to international matters. She is also the chief conference organizer of a series of nonprofit International Conferences on New Information Technology (NIT) for librarians, information professionals, and educational media specialists. In addition, she is the founder and editor-in-chief of *Microcomputers for Information Management: Global Internetworking for Libraries* (MIM), a quarterly international journal published by Ablex.

## Getting Around

**Special Citations . . . Dennis Roth**, specialist in labor economics in the Congressional Research Service and president of CREA, received the 1995 National Partnership Award (Special Citation) presented by Vice President Gore at a ceremony on Feb. 14 at the Office of Personnel Management auditorium. Roth serves as executive vice president and eastern federal area representative of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, with which CREA is affiliated.

—By Jason Yasner