

# Celebrating the 90th Birthday of a Mathematician – Professor Wong Yung-chow



Professor Wong – six decades as a Mathematician and Educator  
(Left) Professor Wong giving a seminar at HKU in 1948

The Department of Mathematics, with the joint sponsorship of the Hong Kong Mathematical Society, held a symposium (<http://hkumath.hku.hk/~math/symposium/>) on May 31, 2003 to celebrate the 90th birthday of a very senior mathematician and teacher, Professor Wong Yung-chow 黃用謙. Professor Wong was the key figure who helped to build up the HKU Department of Mathematics into what it is today. He served actively for almost three decades since 1948 until he officially retired in 1976. He has continued to keep in close contact with the Department as Emeritus Professor. Besides serving as the Head of Department in 1948-1973, he served as the Dean of Engineering in 1950-1953, and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor in 1963-1966. Professor Wong was also much involved with the groundwork of the establishment of the

Chinese University of Hong Kong and served in its Council from 1964 to 1991. He is the Founding President of the Southeast Asian Mathematical Society (established in 1972) and also the Honorary President of the Hong Kong Mathematical Society, which he helped to establish in 1979.

Professor Mok Ngai-ming 莫毅明, Chair of Mathematics Department summed up the symposium, "... thanks to your vision and leadership, a tradition of putting the emphasis on concrete problems, a tradition in which rigorous training in Mathematics is integrated with pioneering research, a tradition in which the Department contributes to the mathematical scene both locally and in the region, and propagates its ideas internationally through its activities and through the training of able students...."



The Symposium turned out to be a very warm "family gathering" in which students, friends and colleagues of Professor Wong paid tribute to the long years of contribution and service of Professor Wong to the Department, to the University, to the local community and to the discipline of mathematics.



Happy 90th Birthday of Professor Wong Yung-chow 黃用謙

Nowadays people tend to pay more attention to strategic research grants or awards of excellence. The respect and admiration and gratitude expressed by so many former students and colleagues to Professor Wong on the occasion of his 90th birthday, three decades after his retirement, would be much more rewarding than any research grant or award can provide. It is this kind of long-term and far-reaching influence that is really that which distinguishes. The Department of Mathematics, like any other organisation or individual in Hong Kong, constantly has to face new challenges. With changing demands on the nature and level of mathematical training of personnel in different walks of life in this information and knowledge-based society, and with the upsurge of applications of mathematics in new areas, the Department has in recent years designed new courses and, in association with the Institute of Mathematical Research, has strengthened interdisciplinary research activities. However, no matter which new trends and new paths we take, those "old" values exemplified in the commitment and good deeds of Professor Y C Wong are always to be treasured and emulated.

Professor Siu Man-Keung 蕭文強  
(BSc(Gen) 1966; BSc(Sp) 1967)  
Head of Department of Mathematics

The first PhD student of Professor Wong, Professor Au-Yeung Yik-hoi 歐陽亦藹 (MSc 1966; PhD 1970), an Honorary Research Fellow and Professor at the Department before retirement, said, "...有機會當黃用謙教授的學生，是我一生之中其中一件最幸運的事情...黃教授對學術要求非常嚴格，但同時有一個非常寬容的學術胸懷。"

Another graduate of the Department, Professor Siu Yum-tong 蕭蔭堂 (BA 1963) of Harvard University and also the C.V. Starr Visiting Professor of the Department, said, "... Single-handedly Professor Wong built up the Mathematics Department of HKU, not only in teaching but also in research. After several decades in mathematical research myself, I appreciate even more how absolutely amazing it is that, with all the administrative responsibilities of putting together a new department, Professor Wong has continued to pursue his mathematical research all the time, producing results of lasting value."