

Gèwèi bìyèshēng
Dear graduates,

Nǐmen hǎo!
How are you?

Wǒ hěn róngxìng jīntiān néng zài zhè
zhòngyào de rìzǐ fābiǎo yǎnjiǎng.
I am honoured to have the opportunity to talk on this
most important day.

Yidian Putonghua

Recently, the last of the Kennedy brothers passed away in the United States. Two of his other brothers had been assassinated because of their views whilst in political office. A third brother had died during the Second World War. The baby of the family Edward was the last to pass away at the age of 77. Last December he was conferred an honorary degree from the very prestigious Harvard University. In accepting the award he spoke of his own life and perhaps his legacy knowing that he was dying of a brain cancer. He said:

“We know the future will outlast all of us, but I believe that all of us will live on in the future we make”. He concluded : “I have lived a blessed time”.¹

This family of Kennedy’s did live very public lives in public service. One of their sisters Eunice Kennedy

¹ John N. Broder “Edward M. Kennedy, Senate Stalwart, is dead at 77”. NY Times August 27, 2009. Accessed on 28 August 2009 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/27/us/politics>

Shriver who died a little before her brother at the age of 88 helped establish the Special Olympics, demonstrating the mentally and physically disabled can achieve great things in the sporting arena. These Special Olympics now follow each Olympic Games so that we recognize all peoples in our world regardless of their capacities. Today you are making the transition from Graduands, people who have completed the academic requirements of your courses, to Graduates. As Graduates of this fine University you will be very proud of what you have achieved and the promise of a strong future. You are to be warmly congratulated and your families are also to be praised for supporting you through the course of your studies as you reach this important stage of your lives.

The responsibility which attends this new status as a Graduate is to continually be good at your profession and to contribute to the welfare of others. You should also have a responsibility to keep in touch with your University and your *Lao Shi* (Teachers) who have worked so hard to assist you to this point. But most of all be true to yourselves and the discipline you have qualified for.

Quite a number of the graduation cohort here today are Library and Information Science Graduates. Regardless however of which profession you have qualified to enter, the value of good information will be paramount in your careers. Understanding how to locate quality authenticated information, of course, is more complicated than just executing a Google search, despite the obvious power and value of a Google search. A

Google search is in many ways a sterile examination of terms generated by the algorithms generated to respond in a way which the search designer feels will deliver something of value. It is entirely dependent on cultural and language sensitivities and ambiguities as well as the perspectives of the 'searcher' and the 'searchee'. Even with the development of the Web 3.0(The Ubiquitous Web) , where it is hoped that the computer will be capable of generating much more intelligent and informative responses to stated questions, you and I will only be beginning to achieve understanding. The computer will only take us so far.

Information is the fundamental building block of good quality work practice and strategy. Information exists in each profession but it is not always recognised for the important role which it plays in successful enterprises. Indeed the best information I have gathered in my own profession life has come from allied social science, business and even life disciplines. Information is not something which is assumed but is tangible and true. Good information has a certain tactility; you can almost touch it; a sense of illumination glows out of good quality information; an intellectual awakening is engendered when pieces of information come together to provide that clarity of thought and approach.

Information is not uni-dimensional, it is multi-dimensional; it has many angles and perspectives; it is multi-layered, leading to much discovery as it is explored, turned around and mulled over. Information does not fall into patterns as would a jig-saw puzzle; it will lie across the field of our minds awaiting for the cerebral connections which each of us will make.

The insights we achieve in our personal and professional lives derive from all these aspects of information. Insights are not linear because they are achieved by a disciplined searching and gathering of information over time; new pieces of information can be connected with other recent instances of information or ancient information; it makes no difference. But there is a huge disconnectiveness about how great insights occur. The insights and knowledge we use in our lives will never happen unless we are alive to the value and potential connections which can be made between seemingly disconnected pieces of information.

As professionals we all need to learn how to collect information, how to recognise quality information which is authenticated and authoritative. The knowledge we have gained in our university education will assist us make the insightful connections but the use of libraries and librarians will always empower and skill us in a literacy enabling greater things.

We can all aspire to greatness or hero status in our own field of expertise. You will recall the crash landing of Flight 1549 into the Hudson River when it hit a flock of geese as it was climbing out of New York's LaGuardia Airport on January 15 earlier this year. The pilot Captain Chesley Sullenberger (known as Sully) made the very rapid decision to ditch the plane into the freezing Hudson River. The flight of this aircraft lasted only a minute and a half but all 155 people on that aircraft survived. His co-pilot related : "I like to say that 5% of pilots are born to fly, 5% wash out fast and the

rest of us are in the middle. Well, Sully's at the tip of the spear.”² I would like to make two points about this story. Firstly, we do not need to be in the newspaper everyday to have an impact in our lives. Sully was and continues to be good at what he does. He found a moment in his ordinary life (a minute and a half to be precise) in which to excel. Secondly, we should all aspire to be in that top 5% of our profession. I do not think that anyone today is graduating as a pilot but we would be remiss if we did leave this Ceremony today without resolving to aspire to be in that top 5% of our chosen field and to keep on trying, even if we do not achieve that ambition immediately. Sully was 58 years of age when he affected the lives of those 155 people so crucially. He said in his recent book “Something about this event was life-affirming. It reminded people of the potential for good that exists in all of us. ...I want people to see I'm just an ordinary guy who, having cultivated certain virtues, was able to perform an extraordinary act. I want people to see that in themselves”³

Remembering the view of Senator Edward Kennedy which I quote earlier in this Address that the “future will outlast all of us, but that all of us will live on in the future we make”, please aspire to the greatness which we all have within us with the skills and knowledge which you have learned during your studies. Keep on striving and stay with your studies to keep abreast of your

² “Something about this event was life-affirming” USA Today October 14, 2009: 9B

³ Op cit: 9B

discipline's knowledge in a rapidly changing world.

Finally, before you leave this graduation can I suggest that you introduce yourself to three new persons in this Graduating Class and resolve to keep in touch; networking is critical and not only within your own discipline.

May your lives be blessed; may your future be happy and productive.

Jīntiān de bìyè diǎnlǐ jiànzhèng le nǐmen
guòqù jǐnián de nǚlì, xīwàng nǐmen
kāichuàng měihǎo míngtiān, bìng wéi shèhuì
fùwù. Gōngxǐ nǐmen!

The graduation ceremony today witnesses your hard work in the past few years. It is hoped that you can explore your potentials and contribute to the society.

Congratulations! Xie xie daija