

Dr Winnie Tang Shuk-ming, JP

Honorary Fellow

Citation

Dr Winnie Tang Shuk-ming was raised by her grandmother in Yuen Long in the New Territories while her parents were busy earning a living. She attributes her success in life to the discipline and ethic of hard work ingrained in her by her life-long role model. Despite her illiteracy, her grandmother raised seven children single-handedly.

As a child, Dr Tang was not allowed to watch television or go out on weekends. Instead, she took up a hobby that she would eventually turn into a career: she liked looking at maps in the local library. In primary school, she began compiling a notebook encyclopedia about the topography, climate, language, and culture of different places in the world. At the age of 14, when Dr Tang first heard about computers, she quickly put them on her learning agenda as an alternative to manual map compilation. At that time a pre-assembled computer was too costly for her, so she built one herself with the help of a few tutorial books and her own pocket money savings.

Dr Tang holds a bachelor's degree in Geography and a PhD in Ecology and Architecture from The University of Hong Kong (HKU). It was during her undergraduate studies that she first encountered Geographic Information System (GIS). As one of 20 students who took a groundbreaking GIS class that year at HKU, she is the only classmate who pursued a career in the field. In her first job, she used GIS to create the first vegetation map of Hong Kong for the local chapter of the World Wildlife Fund and the Hong Kong SAR Government. Later, while studying for her PhD at HKU, she established Hong Kong's first ecological GIS database in collaboration with Department of Ecology and Biodiversity.

While she taught a course in GIS at HKU during her PhD studies, Dr Tang was an ambitious entrepreneur at heart. Aspiring to "solve the problems arising from paper maps by introducing the innovative technology to enhance Hong Kong's competitiveness through utilising geographic information for analysis", she invested all her savings in a GIS startup, at a time when the technology was still virtually unknown in Hong Kong.

Her audacity and perseverance eventually paid off. Today, Dr Winnie Tang Shuk-ming is known as a pioneer in the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) industry in East Asia, a trailblazer who introduced GIS to the public and private sectors in Hong Kong. Her spatial analytics company, Esri China (Hong Kong) Limited, is a market leader in GIS technology and mapping solutions in Hong Kong and Macau. In fact, Esri is considered one of the top software companies in the world.

Running Esri was tough at first. Dr Tang only got four hours of sleep most nights. But she never complained, remembering how cheerful her grandmother remained working day and night to take care of her children and grandchildren. She has lived up to her grandmother's example in all aspects of her life, not only in the boardroom but also in the gymnasium. She is an outstanding table tennis player.

Heeding her grandmother's advice to contribute to the society, Dr Tang has dedicated her professional knowledge and experience to serving the community through ICT, environmental and smart city advocacies, and support for start-ups. She has played a leading role in establishing various non-governmental organisations since 2005, including the eHealth Consortium; the Conservation E3 Foundation; the Smart City Consortium (SCC); and the Asia eHealth Information Network (AeHIN), to promote the deployment of technology in our daily lives.

She also displayed leadership in developing the "SARS Global Map" in 2003 and, more recently, the "Interactive Map Dashboard" for the COVID-19 pandemic in Hong Kong, both of which have received global acclaim. In 2015, her company Esri embarked on the "Map in Learning" programme in Asia, offering free GIS software to non-tertiary students. To date, over 1,000 teachers and students in more than 200 schools have joined the programme. Through Esri, she has instituted several scholarships to encourage more young people to embrace technology for the good of all Hong Kongers.

Currently an adjunct professor at HKU, Dr Tang has published 12 books and over 600 articles in newspapers and journals. Her Chinese-language book, *Surfing the IT World*, published in 2016, won a Publishing Award (in the Commerce and Management category) at the inaugural Hong Kong Publishing Biennial Awards in 2017.

These remarkable achievements have not gone unnoticed. In 2004, she was named a Young Achiever of the Year in the Women of Influence Award by The American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong. In 2006, she was recognised as one of the Ten Outstanding Young Persons in Hong Kong. In 2009, she was appointed a Justice of the Peace by the HKSAR government, and named a Distinguished Alumna by HKU Faculty of Science.

Dr Tang remains dedicated to doing more for the community. Indeed, the motto of her primary school, "Not to be served, but to serve", has echoed through her life. Not only will she continue sharing her knowledge with the society at large, she also plans to focus on nurturing talents in GIS and creating quality job opportunities for the younger generation.

Mr Chairman, because of her exemplary life, achievements in ICT and entrepreneurship, and devotion to the community, I am honoured to present Dr Winnie Tang Shuk-ming for the conferment of an honorary fellowship.

Citation written and delivered by Professor Padmore Amoah