Report on the Creative Animation Knowledge Exchange Festival

July 14-18 2014
Edge Hill University, UK

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
The first Creative Animation Knowledge Exchange Festival (CAKE Festival, 中英创意动漫节) took place at Edge Hill University from 14th to 18th July. The CAKE Festival is a legacy of the UK-Hangzhou Higher Education Collaboration on Animation Education programme jointly set up by the British Council China and the China International Cartoon and Animation Festival (CICAF). The festival also acted as the 1st Overseas Session of the CICAF.

Over 60 Chinese delegates, including officials, professors and students from five universities, attended the festival. During the 5-day event, a series of activities took place, including presentations, workshops, screenings and an awards ceremony honouring the best animation submissions from both British and Chinese entrants. The festival featured a wide range of top level speakers from across the UK Animation sector, such as BAFTA winner and Emmy nominee Geoff Dunbar. CICAF hosted an exhibition on the development of Hangzhou as a national centre of animation education and industry in China, which attracted a large UK audience.

The CAKE Festival brought a number of concrete benefits for both the UK and China, which are outlined below.

II. ORGANISORS, CONTRIBUTORS & PARTICIPANTS

ORGANISORS
- Edge Hill University
- China International Cartoon and Animation Festival
- British Council

CONTRIBUTORS
- BBC
- Adobe
- Aardman
- Mackinnon and Saunders Animation Ltd
- Halas & Batchelor

PARTICIPATING UNIVERSITIES
- Zhejiang University
- China Academy of Art
- Zhejiang University of Media and Communications
- Zhejiang University of Technology
III. BENEFITS & IMPACT

Benefits for the UK

1. **The CAKE Festival showcased the UK’s excellence in animation education and industry.** It helped to further position the UK as a preferred partner in the creative industry, particularly in the animation and cartoon sectors. Professor George Talbot, Pro Vice-Chancellor of Edge Hill University, said: “The CAKE Festival will not only feature contemporary and classic leaders of the international animation industry, it will also highlight the North West of England as a national centre for animation, championing both emerging and established work from the region, as well as welcoming new friends and partners from China.”

2. **The CAKE Festival helped build up a creative network.** A total of eight universities were involved in the event, five from China and three from the UK. The programme provided participating UK higher education institutions with access to a wide range of Chinese government bodies, universities and businesses. “A genuine network has been formed that connects the UK and Chinese institutions. Here I refer to a genuine connection between the UK institutions that provide animation subjects. This is an extremely valuable development as it encourages a non-competitive and fruitful communication relating to the subject of animation across the UK. This would not have been achieved without the initiatives developed by the British Council. The UK collaborations run in parallel to the UK-China collaborations that provide a slightly different set of relationships. The other important development is with the inclusion and introduction of other Chinese institutions to each other. For example, BIGC (Beijing Institute of Graphic Communication) meeting with Changsha Social Work College and CICAF. Definitely we would not have achieved the same results without the support and development of the British Council programmes,” commented Alex Jukes, Programme Leader for Animation Programmes at Edge Hill University.

Benefits for China

3. **The CAKE Festival acted as the 1st Overseas Session of the CICAF.** CICAF, based in Hangzhou, is China’s largest and most influential animation event. It attracted 2 million viewers and RMB14.6 billion in trade volume in 2012 alone. It is listed as one of the key projects supported by the National 12th Five Year Plan and is directly under the administration of the central government. The CAKE Festival acted as the 1st Overseas Session of the CICAF in its 10-year history. This is a remarkable step forward in linking professional animation events in China and the UK together.

4. **The CAKE Festival provided Chinese students with an excellent platform**
to gain first-hand experience of the animation industry. “I am very interested in the production process of clay animation. I am so excited to be able to meet and communicate with the production team of the world famous animation company Aardman, who produced ‘Wallace & Gromit,’” said Yang Xiao, leader of the student delegation from Zhejiang University of Media and Communications.

5. The CAKE Festival brought the world closer to Chinese animation. Professor Shen Huaqing from Zhejiang University showcased his latest water-painting animation project, which combines traditional Chinese water-painting techniques with modern digital animation technologies. The project aroused great interest from the UK audience.

Benefits to participating institutions

6. Sustainable partnerships between institutions on both sides. Edge Hill University expressed strong interest in formal and sustainable collaboration with Chinese universities, such as setting up joint degree programmes. Professor George Talbot held discussions with representatives of Zhejiang University and Zhejiang University of Media and Communications during the festival. Outlines of existing collaboration projects between Edge Hill University and other universities will be sent to Zhejiang University and Zhejiang University of Media and Communications to facilitate the process.

7. Academic visitor programme between Royal College of Art and China Academy of Art. Two representatives from China Academy of Art, professors Yu Jin and Li Jiajia, were invited to visit the Royal College of Art on an academic visitor programme by Professor Joan Ashworth, Head of Programme, Animation, at the Royal College of Art. Discussions on joint research projects were held among both parties. This was a follow-up step to the academic visit to China Academy of Art by a PhD candidate from the Royal College of Art earlier this year.

8. The CAKE Festival brought concrete financial and non-financial benefits to Edge Hill University. In addition to receiving cash funding from CICAF, Edge Hill University benefited greatly from wide exposure in China, particularly the city of Hangzhou, through media coverage at the 1st Overseas Session of the CICAF. This helped Edge Hill University build up its reputation in China and will benefit Edge Hill University in the long term.

9. Chinese delegates plan further visits and study. The Chinese delegates were very impressed with the activities, the speakers and the university, saying it was a very beneficial programme for them. A number of students expressed their intention to further their education in the UK after completing their undergraduate study in China. Many Chinese delegates also plan to take part in further cultural visits to the UK.

IV. ACTIVITIES

Opening ceremony on Day 1, 14th July: Over 50 student delegates, mainly from five
universities in Hangzhou and Beijing, led by Deputy Director Liu Heng from the CICAF and accompanied by Chinese professors in the field of animation, attended the grand opening ceremony of the CAKE Festival. Professor John Cater, Vice Chancellor of Edge Hill University; Professor George Talbot, Pro Vice-Chancellor of Edge Hill University; Mr Liu Heng, Deputy Director of CICAF; and Dr John Law, Higher Education Advisor from the British Council, all delivered speeches at the opening ceremony.

Professor John Cater, Vice Chancellor of Edge Hill University, makes his opening remarks at the opening ceremony of the CAKE Festival on 14th July (top left).

Professor George Talbot, Pro Vice-Chancellor of Edge Hill University, signs a festival backdrop in the Creative Edge Building (bottom right).

Film premiere and workshops by world renowned animators: “Violet City”, a steampunk animation created over the last four years at Liverpool John Moores University’s Liverpool Screen School and set in the city, was screened for the first time at CAKE Festival on the evening of Tuesday 15th July. Speakers at the festival included BAFTA winner and EMMY nominee Geoff Dunbar, the iconic animator and director of “The Cunning Little Vixen”, “Tuesday” and “Daumier’s Law”. Geoff Dunbar, who works closely with Sir Paul McCartney on stories and musical content, presented insights into his animation career and projects, and ran a student workshop. Peter Saunders, director of the world’s leading puppet animation designers and manufacturers Mackinnon and Saunders
Animation Ltd, also delivered a presentation, as did Vivien Halas of Halas & Batchelor. Over the past 50 years, Halas & Batchelor has become the largest and most influential animation studio in Western Europe, making over 2,000 films, including the classic “Animal Farm”. Vivien Halas introduced a documentary on the studio's achievements and a retrospective piece about her mother, Joy Batchelor, coinciding with the centenary of her birth.

**Awards ceremony:** An awards ceremony was held to honour the best animation submissions from both British and Chinese entrants – taking place at Edge Hill University’s new state of the art Creative Edge building. There were two Chinese winners, one for Best of Festival (“The Plum Blossom” from China Academy of Art) and one for Best Student Animation.
Cultural studies programme: The Chinese delegates also attended a week long cultural studies programme organised by Edge Hill University, which started on Saturday 19th July. Delegates visited cities including London, Liverpool and Manchester, as well as well-known heritage sites such as the Lake District, Stratford-upon-Avon, Conwy Castle and Trafford Centre.

V. MEDIA IMPACT
The CAKE Festival is part of an ongoing British Council initiative closely linked to CICAF. This year’s event was also the 1st Overseas Session of CICAF, the first of its kind in the CICAF’s 10-year history. A forum was held to mark the occasion, which brought together Chinese and British students in a discussion of animation works. The CAKE Festival was part of Liverpool’s International Festival for Business, IFB2014, and attracted much attention from various media outlets:

http://eng.hangzhou.gov.cn/main/zpd/English/CityNews/T491741.shtml
http://www.cicaf.com/hzdmcy/xwzx/content/2014-07/15/content_5362061.htm
http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/news/2014/05/film-premiere-world-renowned-animators-announced-cake-festival/

VI. FOLLOW-UP PLAN
The CAKE Festival is a bi-annual event signed by the UK and China, with institutions in both countries taking turns to host the festival. The next festival will be hosted by a Chinese institution in China in 2016.

For further information on the CAKE Festival or its parent project - the UK-Hangzhou Higher Education Collaboration on Animation Education - please contact project manager Jack Zhou at Jack.Zhou@britishcouncil.org.cn.