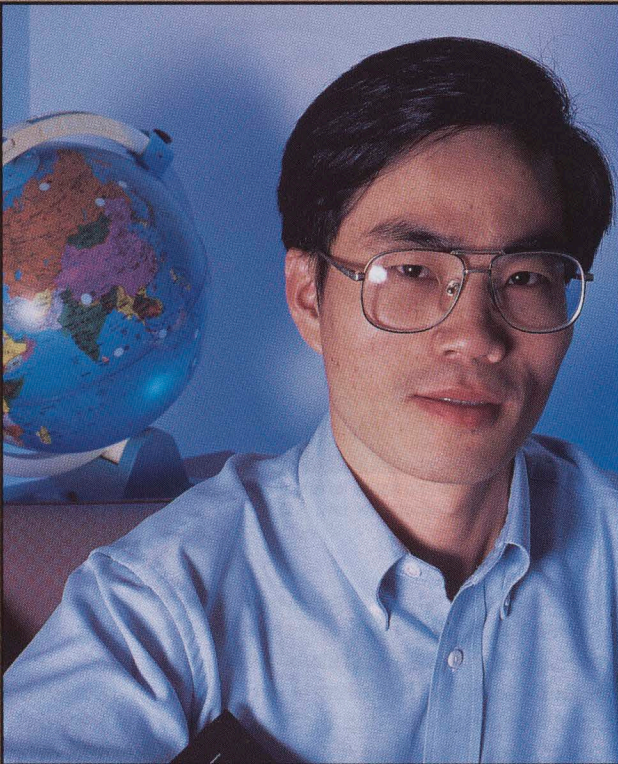


# Research Report

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School of Information Studies professor Alex Tan is an internationally renowned expert on Asian telecommunications policy.

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**-Alex Tan**

## Understanding Asia and the Internet

**F**or Zixiang "Alex" Tan, telecommunications policy in Asia is a question of balance. Asian governments, especially China's, want control over content and provision of Internet service, but don't want to stifle rapid development of their telecommunications markets.

"The governments of the Asian Pacific are very different from that of the United States," says the School of Information Studies professor and internationally renowned expert in telecommunications and network management. "Usually these countries have strong government intervention, policies, and regulation. They are not allowing liberal diffusion, or expansion, of the Internet. They want the Internet and are aware of its economic advantages, but they are running into situations where they cannot control the information."

Tan, who came to SU two years ago from Rutgers University, has an extensive background in telecommunications. He has worked in the field for more than 15 years, taking jobs with a Chinese central government agency, Alcatel's European branch, and a research center at the University of Nebraska. He has been a consultant for such multinational corporations as AT&T, BellSouth, Space Systems/Loral, Vodafone, Telesystem, and IDC. He has also briefed U.S. officials on Chinese telecommunications policy.

With Milton Mueller, director of IST's graduate program in telecommunications and network management, Tan wrote *China in the Information Age: Telecommunications and the Dilemmas of Reform* in 1997. The well-received book was among the first comprehensive studies of China's economic reforms in telecommunications.

Tan's research deals with countries throughout Asia, but focuses on China, where 1.17 million people access the Internet through a limited number of service providers. He works closely with government agencies and his counterparts at Asian universities. "I'm looking at Internet diffusion and the roles governments can play in this diffusion," he says. "They're either promoting it or delaying it because of their policies regulating content and service provision."

China closely controls Internet access because of political, economic, and cultural interests, Tan says. "They're concerned about cultural invasion from the United States. That's not just true for Asia—European countries are also experiencing this. The United States dominates the web. Asian countries are concerned about social values; their standards are very different. An example is the pornographic content of some sites from the United States. Most of them cannot be accepted in the Asian Pacific, even for adults."

Controlling content has proved a major challenge, however. "Previously, physical boundaries could isolate your country from others," Tan says. "Now the Internet eliminates that, so there has to be some kind of policy." China deals with the problem in various ways, ranging from forbidding users to view certain sites to requir-



ing Internet service providers (ISPs) to keep records of sites their customers visit.

Tan also examines burgeoning foreign investment in the Asian Pacific, and his research helps U.S. companies make wise investments. With a potential subscriber base of 1.2 billion in China, for example, it's easy to see why foreign ISPs are lining up to serve the market. Few, however, will be allowed to set up shop. "Governments are concerned about whether foreigners will control their networks," Tan says. "You can sell them hardware and software, but once it comes to operating the networks, most countries are very concerned. It's kind of a balance—they want to buy something from you, but they also want to develop their own industries."

Resistance to China's especially stiff regulation of the Internet comes mostly from international groups monitoring censorship and human rights violations. Tan believes it's a domestic issue and should be treated that way. "Groups in the United States cannot use First Amendment rights to make a case," he says. "China is another country. Are we trying to export our legal system to another country?"

Domestic resistance to regulation has been mainly on economic grounds, he says. "People say if you have strict regulation, you are stifling competition; and if you are not bringing in a lot of competition, prices will be high. Service quality will be limited. To that extent, they are delaying diffusion, and that's a major concern. This is something they have to balance. You have to sacrifice to gain."

—GARY PALLASSINO

## Shining light on the world's stained glass

Long before canvas was available for artists, medieval painting took the form of stained glass, prominently displayed in churches, cathedrals, and other great structures. When illuminated by sunlight, these colorful creations became works of beauty and brilliance. But sadly, according to College of Arts and Sciences professor Meredith Lillich, "stained glass is deteriorating at an awesome rate."

As professor of medieval art and architecture in the Department of Fine Arts, Lillich is participating in a massive undertaking to locate and record the world's stained glass. She is a member of Corpus Vitrearum, a council established in 1952 to publish scholarly studies and produce definitive reference works on all stained glass that survives from the Medieval and Renaissance periods. The council consists of representatives from about a dozen countries united in efforts to find and preserve what is left of an art form popular centuries ago and now threatened by pollution. The U.S. branch of the vitrearum was founded in 1982.

Lillich and her colleagues are responsible for producing volumes on pre-1700 stained glass in America. The task will take decades, she says, because much of America's stained glass collection is either privately owned or in museums, so tracking it down is a tedious process.

The two-time Fulbright Scholar played an integral part in developing checklists to organize the effort. These lists inventoried stained glass in all 50 states as a preliminary stage of the vitrearum volumes. Lillich then courted the National Gallery of Art to publish



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Fine arts professor Meredith Lillich is part of an intensive effort to catalog the world's stained glass collection. Part of her research focuses on pre-1700 stained glass in New York State.

the lists. "It is, after all, our national museum," she says.

One of the most rewarding aspects of being involved with Corpus Vitrearum has been the gradual implementation of the members' research, Lillich says. "The compiling of the physical evidence is beginning to happen, which is exciting."

Lillich, who has shared her knowledge and expertise with students for 31 years, notes that three of her former students serve on the U.S. committee of Corpus Vitrearum: Renee George Burnam G'82, G'88, who is also an author for the Italian Corpus Vitrearum committee; Professor Helen Zakin G'77 of the SUNY College at Oswego; and Professor Alyce Jordan '81, G'87 of Northern Arizona University.

Although encyclopedias of stained glass are expensive to produce, target a limited audience, and take many years to complete, Lillich says Harvey Miller Publications of London will publish the nine volumes. The first volume will be *European Stained Glass in the Cloisters and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York*. Her volume, *Stained Glass From Before 1700 in New York State*, will likely be the next one published. "This is a project that is really just beginning," she says.

Lillich enjoys being part of a project that will help perpetuate interest and encourage progress in stained glass research for years to come. Student interest in the historic links between stained glass and other arts has increased, and her research with Corpus Vitrearum has a direct influence on her classroom approach. "What I teach always reflects what is happening with my research," she says.

Lillich also studies Cistercian monks' art and architecture, and stained glass found throughout parts of France. Each year, her gothic art students travel to France for research.

Lillich's fascination with stained glass developed gradually. She cites the Fulbright awards as the "major shoves" toward her scholarly study of stained glass. "It made an enormous difference to me and my career," says Lillich, one of the first Fulbright recipients.

Now, as a leading expert, her work inspires others to probe the historic and aesthetic worlds of stained glass. She is also confident that today's art students will eventually continue the work of Corpus Vitrearum and gradually bring stained glass into its rightful place in art history. "Stained glass has enjoyed something of a renaissance in recent years," she says.

—KERI POTTS AND TAMMY CONKLIN