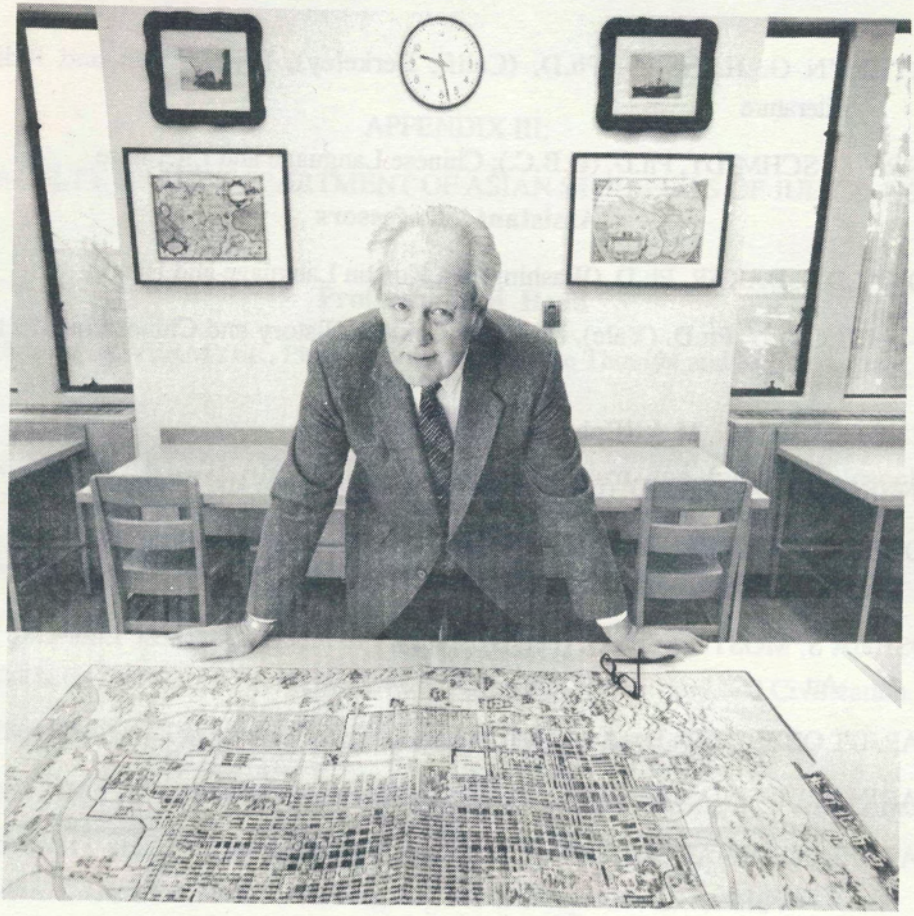


John F. Howes

John F. Howes

Roy Starrs
Union College

It is hard to imagine UBC's Department of Asian Studies without the substantial and amiable presence of Professor John F. Howes, one of its guiding spirits over the past three decades. He will be missed as much for his endearing human qualities as for his skill and patience in teaching and his clear-sighted and wide-ranging scholarship. And no one will miss him more than the students. At a time when academics are often criticized for being devoted too exclusively to research at the expense of the students, Professor Howes set an example for us all. He gave generously of his time and energy to help students at all levels with every manner of problem, whether it was a freshman struggling to understand the meaning of life – or, at least, life at UBC – or a Ph.D student trying to puzzle out the best approach to his dissertation. For one and all, Professor Howes' door was always open. Since a large university can often seem a cold and impersonal place, especially to younger undergraduates, it was a great comfort to us to be welcomed by a warm smile and a friendly word from this large and rather fatherly figure, who always seemed willing to take time out of a very busy schedule to listen to our problems or just to have a friendly chat. In this sense, he brought a refreshing taste of small college life to a large university setting. But his sociability was by no means restricted to the campus – it often seemed that the door to his house was as open as the door to his office. And certainly this is another aspect of his generosity which will be greatly missed: the way he often made available for student and faculty parties his beautiful Point Grey house with its spectacular view of ocean, mountains and city lights. Some of my own

fondest memories of my time at UBC are of the get-togethers we had at this house on the hill.

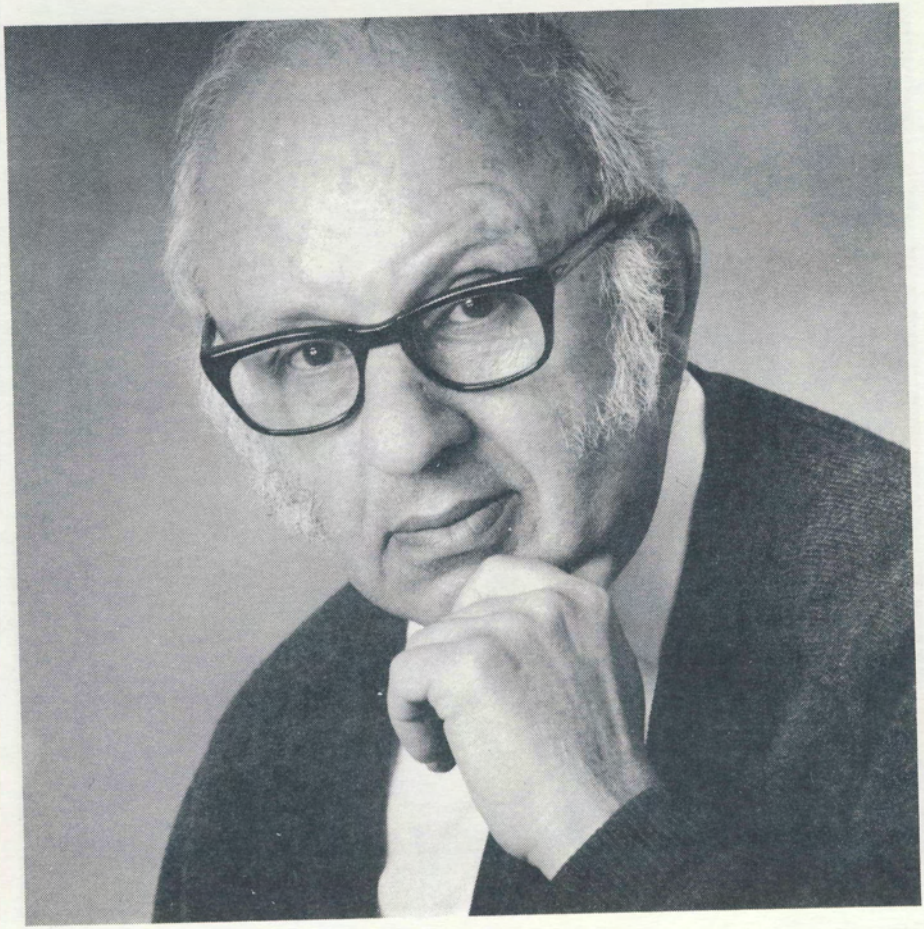
Another way in which Professor Howes confounds the critical stereotype of the modern academic is in the remarkably wide scope of his interests and enthusiasms. Though, of course, as a scholar of Japanese intellectual history he does have his particular area of expertise, he is certainly no narrow specialist, focused exclusively on some arcane bit of pedantry. Here is a man who has taken the whole of life as his natural province of study, and so he will often betray a charmingly boyish enthusiasm for everything from a Bach cantata to a BCR train. And, more importantly, these enthusiasms have been translated into actions throughout his life: he sings those cantatas and he rides on those trains – and even more, he participates actively in church affairs and has worked to preserve the Canadian train system as a vital part of our national heritage, serving, for instance, on the VIA Rail West Advisory Council. Thus Professor Howes' generosity of spirit has revealed itself as abundantly in his services to the community at large as to his students and colleagues.

Coming to UBC in 1961, just a few years after the founding of the Department of Asian Studies, Professor Howes played a central role in nurturing the phenomenal growth in Asian Studies which has occured at UBC since then. Perhaps the most significant single event in all this period was the 1981 opening of the Asian Centre, a magnificent building in an equally magnificent setting. As a facility for Asian Studies which is unparalleled in North America, the Centre has incalculably strengthened Asian Studies at UBC, and no doubt will continue to do so. Since Professor Howes had a major hand in the extensive planning and fund-raising which the Centre required, it must be regarded as one of his most important and lasting legacies.

On an intellectual level, Professor Howes introduced a unique and important perspective into Japan studies at UBC: the study of modern Japanese intellectual history from the point of view of some of its leading Christian and pacifist thinkers, especially Uchimura Kanzoo (1861-1930) and Nitobe Inazoo (1862-1933). The latter, of course, is the distinguished writer and diplomat who died in Victoria and after whom UBC's beautiful Japanese garden is named. Even in Japan itself,

Professor Howes is recognized as a leading authority on these two important figures of modern Japanese intellectual life. His publications on Uchimura and Nitobe are too numerous to list here, but everyone in the field is eagerly looking forward to the publication of what promises to be his *magnum opus*: a revised version of an 800-page biographical study he has written on Uchimura Kanzoo. More generally, Professor Howes' major book-length publications include: *Pacifism in Japan: The Christian and Socialist Tradition* (Vancouver: UBC Press and Kyoto: Minerva Press, 1978), *Tradition in Transition, The Modernization of Japan* (New York: Macmillan, 1975), and *Japanese Religion in the Meiji Era* (Tokyo: Ministry of Education, 1956). At present he is also editing *Nitobe Inazoo and his Works*, a volume of papers read at the Nitobe-Ohira Memorial Conference at UBC's Asian Centre in 1984. To further the cause of Japan studies in Canada at large, Professor Howes has also edited two volumes for the Japan Foundation, the 1983 *Directory of Japan Specialists in Canada* and *Japan Studies in Canada, 1987*.

Though we speak now of his retirement, this applies only, of course, to his long and distinguished career at UBC. Professor Howes remains as active as ever, in teaching as well as in research. At present he is teaching at Obirin University, just outside Tokyo, where his former Ph.D student, George Oshiro, is also a colleague. There seems a kind of karmic appropriateness in this, since Professor Howes graduated from Obirin's sister institution, Oberlin College, back in 1950. We might be tempted to say that his career has thus come full circle, but that would have too much finality about it. Given the achievements of his past, we should all continue to expect great things from Professor Howes in the future.



Leon Hurvitz

Leon Hurvitz

Sonja Arntzen
University of Alberta

It is an honor to write an appreciation of Professor Leon Hurvitz on the occasion of his retirement from formal duties. Although there is much to be written to laud his impressive achievements in the area of Buddhist scholarship, it is Leon Hurvitz, human being as well as scholar, whom I would like to record here and applaud. It seems to me that there should never be a time when people forget this marvelous person.

Professor Hurvitz came to the University of British Columbia at the peak of his career in 1971. Prior to this, he had already served at the University of Washington for sixteen years. He began his long romance with languages in his childhood, starting with the study of Hebrew at his synagogue and French at school. He went on to learn German as well. As an undergraduate at the University of Chicago, he chose to major in Latin and Greek. It was the Second World War that changed the direction of his scholarship. There was a notion at that time that classical scholars would have an advantage in learning Chinese and Japanese since they were already working with difficult languages. When Hurvitz was drafted, he was assigned to study Japanese in the Defense Department's center for language training and translation. Not content just to learn the modern form of the language, he began to study on his own the classical language as well; he was a classical scholar after all. Professor Hurvitz has said that next to Greek, classical Japanese struck him as one of the most beautiful languages in the world. Hence, even after the war, he pursued studies in Japanese. The study of medieval Japanese took him to Buddhism which opened up another vista

for inquiry. He would eventually ring the world with the study of languages in the pursuit of the history of the dissemination of Buddhism.

Leon Hurvitz is one of the giants in the field of Buddhist studies. Two works alone would have secured him a place on the honor roll of Buddhist scholars. One is his study of Chih-yi, *Chih-yi (538-597): An Introduction to the Life and Ideas of a Chinese Buddhist Monk* (Brussels, 1963). Chih-yi accomplished the monumental task of interpreting and systemetizing all the many schools of Buddhism that were active in China at that time. Out of this came the most catholic of the Buddhist schools of thought, T'ien T'ai, which in turn gave rise to all the other important schools from that point forward. Hurvitz's study remains the standard work on Chih-yi in English. To produce a work that remains current over such a long period of time is no mean accomplishment. The other work that has assured his claim to fame is the translation of the Lotus Sutra, *The Lotus of the True Dharma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976). This work, based on the Kumarajiva Chinese version but carefully compared with the Sanskrit original, is generally acknowledged as the best translation of this most important scripture for East Asia. Of all the translations of the *Lotus*, Hurvitz's best conveys the exquisite beauty and comforting message of the original. It is a work of literary as well as scholarly art. Many others of his publications deserve mention, but there is only room here for a few. Nonetheless, even on an abbreviated list, room must be made for his translation of Tsukamoto Zenryu's *History of Early Chinese Buddhism*, with additional material by Hurvitz himself. Published in two volumes by Kodansha in 1985, it is monumental in scale and importance. Most recent to be published is *Early Chinese Buddhism at Sixes and Sevens*, with Shotaru Iida, Jain Publishing Company, 1989, a translation of Chi-tsang's account of the traditions surrounding the creation of the first Buddhist schools on Chinese soil, with commentary by Ancho. Lastly, his selfless labor in recent years to complete Arthur Link's translation of the works of Tao-an, a 4th century Chinese Buddhist monk, must be acknowledged. The translation was nearly completed at the time of Professor Link's death, but might have been lost to the world had not Professor Hurvitz taken up the task of its completion.

Reading Professor Hurvitz's official curriculum vitae from the university files is an experience in itself. While he is an impeccable scholar with respect to accuracy and thoroughness in preparing written work, his CV is full of lacunae. Updated in 1988, it still listed his *Lotus Sutra* translation as forthcoming. Publishers were missing here and there. He only listed one graduate student when I know there were more, myself for one. Yet, while showing a cavalier disregard for his own career, the CV contained one statement that summed up his scholarly passion perfectly:

> What interests me most is the diffusion of Buddhism, principally in East Asia. To that end, I have studied a number of languages, from Sanskrit to Japanese (and including Tibetan, Chinese, Mongol, Manchu, and a bit of Korean; also Pali, related to Sanskrit). The phenomenon of language continues to interest me, and my principal work, whether it involves Buddhist texts in Chinese or mediaeval Japanese literature, is language work. In a word, I am a philologist.

This is a statement of his Way, his Tao, his Michi. His single-minded devotion to language empowered him to read texts with a penetrating understanding because he invested no energy in thinking about what a text ought to be saying: he directed his inquiry only to what it was saying. Anyone among the many graduate students studying Buddhism in the years 1971-1974 will remember the intense reading experiences in the on-going seminar that met regularly at the home of either Professor Link or Professor Hurvitz, changing course numbers to meet bureaucratic necessity but essentially a continuous phenomenon with three professors, Hurvitz, Link, and Iida, and anywhere from 6 to 10 graduate students. We went through texts like *Seng Chou's Treatise*, the *Vimalakirta Sutra*, and *Anchô's Commentary on Chi-tsang* at a timeless pace. If to read one line of Chinese accurately, it took consultation of numerous dictionaries, looking at the Sanskrit original or reconstruction, or the Tibetan translation, or an hour of discussion among our three worthy professors, then we did that, sometimes all of that. You might think it would drive students mad but the opposite was true; the focused concentration of the process was akin to meditation and left one feeling somehow clear. Through this training by example rather than exhortation, there was not one of us that did not come away with a deep respect for

what it took to read texts. "Painstaking" became the only way we knew how to conduct scholarship.

The last page of the publications record in Professor Hurvitz's CV contains the following note:

> There was finally a Buddhist conference at which I read a critical summary of the contents of the *Sango shiki*, a mock debate, staged by Kukai, a Japanese Buddhist monk of the ninth century, among three gentlemen, a spokesman for Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism respectively. (Guess who won.)

It is very fitting that Professor Hurvitz should include, even in as soulless a document as a CV, a joke. At the same time that this statement displays his non-attachment to his record as a scholar, it also expresses his delight in the activity of scholarship.

Some of my fondest memories of Professor Hurvitz are of him singing. Whenever he saw my small daughter, he would invariably break into the Alphabet song that he had composed himself, A is for Aardvark,.... Or there was the time that he came for supper and afterwards, promptly fell asleep in our living room. While the rest of us in the room, lit only by the fireplace, discussed such things as the movements of people over the continents in millennia past, Hurvitz dozed on. Suddenly, he awoke and recited from beginning to end Coleridge's "On Xanadu did Kublai Khan / A stately pleasure dome decree...." Somehow, it was the most appropriate, as well as remarkable, thing that he could have done.

Under the work in progress in Professor Hurvitz's CV is an annotated translation of the writings of Hui-yüan, a 4th-5th century Chinese monk, another key figure in early Chinese Buddhism. Estimated to reach a thousand pages, and due to be published by the Institute Belge des Hautes Etudes Chinoises, it will be another foundation stone for the study of early Chinese Buddhism. It is clear that while Leon Hurvitz's formal appointment as a professor may have ended, his life as a scholar is far from over. We can all wish him a long and productive retirement in which he can savour the delights of the activity he loves best, reading, explicating, and translating texts.