



# Grapevine

## WANNA BE A ROCKSTAR?

Look at the billboards in Hong Kong and you'll see the usual glam, with a difference: beside the models, pop singers and movie stars are cram-school tutors like Richard Eng, the Lamborghini-driving co-founder of one of HK's biggest cram schools, Beacon College. According to a *New York Times* report, about 300,000 of HK's 800,000 students regularly attend cram schools, each paying about HK\$1,000 or \$155 in monthly fees. Terence Lee, Annie Yeung, Johnathon Kwok, Winnie So, Wister Chan or Oscar Tam can help you with the maths. According to a 2005 survey by researchers at the University of Hong Kong, 70 per cent of HK high school students and 50 per cent of primary school students had hired tutors at some point. Beacon College is one of the four big cram school chains, but there are about 800 smaller ones: hence all the billboards and ads and cram-star grooming. One of Richard Eng's students told the *NY Times*'s Yuk-Hang Ng he liked the fact that his teacher was stylish. 'He looks like a pop star.... That makes him different from regular day-school teachers, who look more boring and worn-out.' Changes to the HK education system that reduce the emphasis on high-stakes university-entrance exams that come into effect this month may dampen demand in an industry that turns over more than \$500 million a year.

## THE GENIUS OF CHARLES DARWIN

Don't hold your breath waiting for *The Genius of Charles Darwin*, a three-part television documentary written and presented by evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins. At this stage, according to Parker

Bourke, from ABC Audience and Consumer Affairs, 'The ABC has not purchased the rights to the program.' Never mind that this year marks 150 years since Darwin published *On the Origin of Species*, the exciting news is it's still actually possible to argue over evolution. Anyone care to argue over, say, gravity? Put your hand down, please, Professor Alan D Sokal, author of the spoof article, 'Transgressing the boundaries: Towards a transformative hermeneutics of quantum gravity,' published in *Social Text* in 1996. Evolution, apparently, is an arguable social construct; gravity is not. Maybe a transformative hermeneutics of broadcasting commonsense might get *The Genius of Charles Darwin* onto ABC TV's broadcasting schedule. Maybe we ought all to forget about hermeneutics and just hope for the evolution of broadcasting commonsense. Please, ABC TV, just broadcast *The Genius of Charles Darwin*.

## THE GENIUS OF CHARLES DICKENS

'I love books as much as anybody, but I love reading more.' So wrote Ann Kirschner, dean of William E Macaulay Honors College at the City University of New York, in a review of Charles Dickens' *Little Dorrit* in the *Chronicle Review*. In truth, Kirschner wasn't reviewing *Little Dorrit*, but the relative merits of paperback, audiobook, Kindle and iPhone editions. Kirschner moved between her old Penguin edition, a downloaded audiobook, where she was 'stuck with a competent but uninspired narrator,' and her iPhone, using eReader, which gave her the option of the same Penguin edition. And what about Kindle, the Amazon.com

device, which is only available in the United States and depends on Whispernet, also only available in the US? Kirschner abandoned her Kindle edition almost as soon as she'd read a chapter on her iPhone. 'Kindle, shmindle,' she wrote. 'It does almost nothing that an iPhone can't do better.... With free software like eReader or Stanza, iPhone readers have the same capability for customisation and a more-elegant interface.' Worse, 'The only time I relied on my Kindle was on vacation,' Kirschner admitted, when 'all the grown-ups on beach chairs seemed to have one, as if we all had obeyed some secret command to buy Kindles and wear sunscreen.' As Kirschner observed, the bad news is that Kindle's largest market is over 50. 'Middle-aged readers think that the dimension of the screen is critical,' she wrote. 'It's not. The members of the generation that grew up playing Game Boys...will have absolutely no problem reading from a small screen.' And if Dickens were alive, he'd surely have experimented with all the new formats.

## WHY NOT GREEN?

The Dusseldorp Skills Forum (DSF) Y Green program is gaining lots of interest. DSF's first Y Green site will involve a group of Year 10 students from Central Coast Youth Connections in New South Wales, who commenced their training this month. If your students are interested in running Y Green in 2010 or want to attend a free train-the-trainer course for schools or TAFEs in NSW, register your interest by emailing [lesley@dsf.org.au](mailto:lesley@dsf.org.au)

*The Grapevine is written by Steve Holden, Editor of Teacher.*

# ROCK AND WATER TRAINING PROGRAM

SAFETY | INTEGRITY | SOLIDARITY | SELF-CONTROL | SELF-CONFIDENCE | SELF-RESPECT



Produced by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), 2010

Our Rock and Water program has won international and national awards. Proudly presented by The Family Action Centre and Gadaku Institute, the program offers teachers, educators and youth workers a new way to interact with boys and girls through physical-social teaching. Our program constantly links physical exercises with mental and social skills, leading to a strong notion of self-confidence and an awareness of purpose and motivation.

**National Training Tour October – November 2009**

For dates, information and to download the registration form, visit [www.newcastle.edu.au/rockandwater](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/rockandwater)



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