Background
Thirty year is almost one third of a century. It is not easy for an individual to stay in the OHS profession for such a long time. I sometimes joke with the newcomers to this profession that the profession is hardly a self-fulfilling one as it is difficult if not impossible to measure success if any. Like doctor, police, fireman, the better a safety practitioner performs, the quicker he / she may be out of business. If the doctors are so very proficient as to make less people getting sick, then more hospitals and clinics will be emptied and need to be closed down with these doctors being laid off. Similarly, if there are no robbers, or no fires, then the police and firemen will be seen as overly surplus in manpower supply. As for safety practitioners, we can never justify how much lives we could and would have saved by implementing certain OHS programme. On the other hand, either the accident and compensation figures or the amounts of investment on safety provisions are always on the expenditure list. To stay in the OHS profession for thirty years, we need not only knowledge and skills in the trade, but perseverance and a never-failing heart filled with compassion for the working class. But what if the accident rate has been lowered to almost zero? How can the momentum on good safety performance be sustained? The answer lies in health and safety education and promotion. For police, fire services and health care services where the crime rate, fire rate and sickness rate decrease, more funding should be expended in community education and promotion on crime, fire and disease prevention. Similarly, safety training and education is the key to accident prevention. One of the key ways of doing this is by providing health and safety information.

Many have already written on the development of the OHS profession in Hong Kong in the past years, but seldom from the perspective of witnessing the development and changes in the publication of OHS informative materials, in particular the ones that were published from the 1970’s to 1990’s and have now become extant. This article serves to provide readers with a glimpse of some of those already out-of-print materials. Since the number of similar materials published in the 2000’s are ten times as much, and most of them are still available from the producers who are mainly the relevant Government departments, they are not included in the discussion.
OHS Informative Materials in the 1970’s

Thirty years back, it was the late 1970’s. After the Second World War, Hong Kong turned into an important industrial city, partly due to the post-war redevelopment, and partly a result of the migration of industrial entrepreneurs from Mainland China in the early 1950’s. By that time the industries were so prosperous that work had to be “outsourced” to the residential sector, thereby creating the family industries. These small factories operating in residential units created a lot of fire, noise, vibration, bad smell and other safety and environmental problems. To cope with the increasing demand for control over the risks posed by the fast developing industries, the Factories and Industrial Ordinance and many subsidiary regulations were enacted since 1955. The promotion of knowledge of industrial safety and health at that time were vested on a handful of Factory Inspectors and Industrial Hygienists who were however already too busy in inspecting factories and construction sites. Learning on industrial safety and health was mainly attained through informative materials published by the Labour Department (Fig. 1). Most of these materials were quite wordy and without any Labour Department logo in the covers.

Fig. 1 Some industrial safety and health booklets, leaflets and letter issued by the Labour Department in the 1970’s
Access to useful overseas health and safety information was still limited. Local bookstores only carried Chinese books on this topic, and these were mainly Taiwanese authored or translated ones (Fig. 2).

![Fig. 2 Books on industrial safety and / or hygiene published in the 1970’s](image)

The Labour Department ran an Industrial Safety Training Centre where some U.K. safety journals were kept, but materials in this Centre could not be borrowed out. The most noticeable one was “Industrial Safety”, later retitled as “The Safety Practitioner”, “The Safety and Health Practitioner”, “Safety and Health Practitioner (in short SHP)”, issued by the then Institution of Industrial Safety, the predecessors of the present IOSH. In its April 1974 issue, there was an article on the Hong Kong’s Safety Scene (Fig. 3). Of course, the content materials was fed by a local safety practitioner, who happened to be the Industrial Safety Training Officer of the Labour Department.

![Fig. 3 April 1974 Issue of the Industrial Safety Journal](image)

The Hong Kong Fire Services Department also published a handful of fire prevention booklets and pamphlets, offered free to the public. The materials showed that home fire, factory fires, hill fires, and not commercial fires, were their main concern (Fig. 4).
Fig. 4 Fire Safety Materials produced by the HKFSD in the 1970’s

Many other informative materials published by the HKFSD were still supplied today. Since these materials were not out-of-print ones, they were not presented here.

In those early days, besides publishing general materials or getting the fire safety message across in its Codes of practice, the HKFSD issued professional fire safety requirements in the form of Fire Services Circular Letters and Fire Services Requirements Letters, but these were only sent to the Architects, Fire Services Contractors or the affected parties, and were not open to the public (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5 Fire Services Circular Letter and Fire Services Requirements issued by the HKFSD in the 1970’s

Apart from the Factory Inspectors of the Labour Department, there were some safety officers practicing in the private sector, mainly in large utilities, oil companies, construction companies etc. Private sector participation in the production of OHS informative materials was minimal. Most of the available materials were in-house safety manuals or handbooks which were not accessible by the other practitioners in the field. Another source of safety informative materials was from proceedings in the safety seminars. As a platform for experience sharing, the first local professional
safety institution, the Hong Kong Occupational Safety and Health Association (HKOSHA), was formed in 1978. And it was also one of the first few in organizing safety seminars in the wider Asian Pacific region (Fig. 6).

Fig. 6 Proceedings of the Asian Regional Safety and Accident Prevention Congress jointly organized by the HKOSHA with the CMA of Hong Kong and the World Safety Organization in November 1980

An in-house journal titled “Safety Bulletin” was published by the HKOSHA and served as a useful magazine for safety practitioners. I had previously submitted several articles which were published in the 1990 issues (Fig. 7).

Fig. 7 Articles published in the 1990 issues of the “Safety Bulletin” published by the HKOSHA

In 1979, the Hong Kong Polytechnic officially launched the first local safety officer certificate course. The course provided students with systematic education and training in industrial safety as well as in construction safety. Tutors were mainly from the Industrial Centre of the Polytechnic and also from the Labour Department.
OHS Informative Materials in the 1980’s

The MTR (excluding the previous KCR section) project commenced in 1975 and the first phase was completed in 1979. With the high demand of real estate development along the line, it marked a sudden shift in workplace risk nomenclature from the traditional multi-faceted factories to the construction industry. The Construction Sites (Safety) Regulations was enacted in 1978 and took full steam ahead in the 1980’s. The Labour Department continued to issue safety guide booklets and leaflets, some of which were now coined with an “IS” logo at the covers (Fig. 8).

Fig. 8 OHS Leaflets and Booklets published by the Labour Department in the 1980’s

The 1980’s also saw the joint effort of some quasi-Government organization and local association in promoting health and safety at work, in particular in the construction sector. It is interesting to note that in one exhibition a safety guide booklet was printed with a special stamp in the inner cover (Fig. 9).
Fig. 9 Safety Guide issued in 1980 by the Labour Department and CITA, with the support of HKBCA.

Apart from printing booklets and leaflets, the Labour Department inspectors and hygienists also contributed articles in newspaper as a tool in promoting industrial safety and health to the wider public. As said above, some local organizations, such as the Industrial Centre of the Hong Kong Polytechnic and the Federation of Trade Union had also contributed as the joint-authors of some of the articles. (Fig. 10)

Fig. 10 Articles written by the Labour Department Factory Inspector and Industrial Hygienists in the 1980’s in the Sing Pao.
There were also occupational health articles written by medical professionals and published in newspaper as well as local occupational health journals (Fig. 11).

Fig. 11 Articles written by medical Practitioners of the Workers Health Centre in Sing Pao in the 1980’s

Informative environmental health materials were issued by the Environmental Protection Department of the Hong Kong Government in the 1980’s, most serving to explain local environmental laws (Fig. 12).

Fig. 12 Environmental Protection Department Guidebooks published in the 1980’s
With the establishment of the Occupational Safety and Health Council (OSHC) in 1988, health and safety at work in Hong Kong entered into a new era. First, the Council contributed to alleviate the very heavy workload of the Factory Inspector by helping in organizing safety courses to the public. The first batch of these safety courses were almost all industrial safety ones, ranging from the metalworking industry, plastic industry, textile industry to the construction industry. Before long, as its name implied, occupational safety and health courses were also launched.

It is worth mentioning here that the first local monthly safety journal titled “Industrial Safety” was published by a local safety equipment supplier from December 1982 till September 1983, at a price of HK$ 5 each. By that time, industrial safety awareness was still very low, and evidently the publisher found it difficult to sustain, so that only ten issues had been published. Each issue concentrated on a specific topic: Issues 1 on noise, 2 on fire safety, 3 on working at height, 4 on underground construction safety, 5 on chemical safety, 6 on safety practitioners, 7 on electrical safety, 8 on environment protection, 9 on accident and machinery safety, and the final one 10 on manual handling. The hazard of ozone, illustrated in the classical case of the Mabuchi incident, was discussed in Issue 5, the issue on chemical safety (Fig. 13).

![Fig. 13 The first issue of the “Industrial Safety” Journal, and the article on ozone in the fifth issue.](image)

The Industrial Health Division of the Labour Department was renamed Occupational Health Division in the mid 1980’s, signifying an early move away from industrial hygiene to a wider appeal of occupational hygiene in all workplaces, though it would take another decade before the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance was to be enacted. At about the same time, in 1986, the Labour Department passed the Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Safety Officers and Safety Supervisors) Regulations which dealt with the registration and employment of safety officers.
OHS Informative Materials in the 1990’s
The Labour Department, Fire Services Department and Environmental Protection Department, to name a representative few, continued to offer to the public free informative materials on safety and health at work in the 1990’s. This newer batch of materials by the Labour Department now carried a “LD” letter logo with the Chinese word “Work” inside the letter “D”, or during the transition dual “IS” and “LD” logos. (Fig. 14)

Fig. 14 Safety informative materials issued by the Labour Department in the 1990’s

Ever since its establishment, the OSHC had been publishing a lot of safety booklets and pamphlets which were distributed for free to the public (Fig. 15).

Fig. 15 Safety Booklets and leaflets published by the OSHC in the 1990’s
The OSHC also published a bimonthly journal titled “Green Cross” since January 1991. It remained the only local free and routinely published journal as of today (Fig. 16).

By the 1990’s, many other local educational institutions began to offer safety courses, ranging from the certificate level to the postgraduate degree level. Students could access a wider choice of safety publications. Some local safety and health pioneers began to write books on safety and health at work which were also used as textbooks in the local safety courses (Fig. 17). Access to overseas safety literature were made easier through the development of mail order and on-line book purchases, as well as collaboration between local and overseas educational institutions in the organization of academic safety courses.

From the 1990’s onwards, there were many other safety and health professional societies and organizations being inaugurated, and they produced many in-house journals which further helped to disseminated information on safety and health at work (Fig. 18).
Fig. 18 In-house journals of other local safety and health organizations in the 1990’s and beyond

The Environmental Protection Department also kept on producing more environmental health booklets in the 1990’s (Fig. 19)

Fig. 19 Environmental health booklets produced by the EPD in the 1990’s
In an effort to conserve resources, many Government and local organizations are now publishing their health and safety materials on-line, and electronic copies can be downloaded and saved to save paper. As a result of the widespread use of internet, health and safety information are now overwhelmingly easy to access. But 30 years ago, possession of a book on workplace health and safety is almost a luxury to a practitioner in this field.

Conclusion
While there is an intention to arouse the collective memory of those who have been in the trade for 30 years like myself, I have a more extravagant dream, and that is the establishment of an occupational safety and health museum. We have an OSH library in the OSHC where many workplace health and safety literature and audio visual materials are available, and we have a railway museum, a military museum …, but we do not have an OSH museum here. Workplace health and safety informative materials form part of the history of the OSH development in Hong Kong. If an OSH museum is not established, and right now I can only see either the Labour Department or the OSHC to be capable of making up one, then another 30 years from now, I can only foretell that the legacy will be lost, and lost forever.