

The I Ching and the dyslexic

By Claire Hurn

Michael Hurn is a local author. He also happens to be dyslexic, but this has not stopped him from making perhaps the most fundamental change to the layout of the *I Ching* since it was first put into book form by King Wen 3,000 years ago.

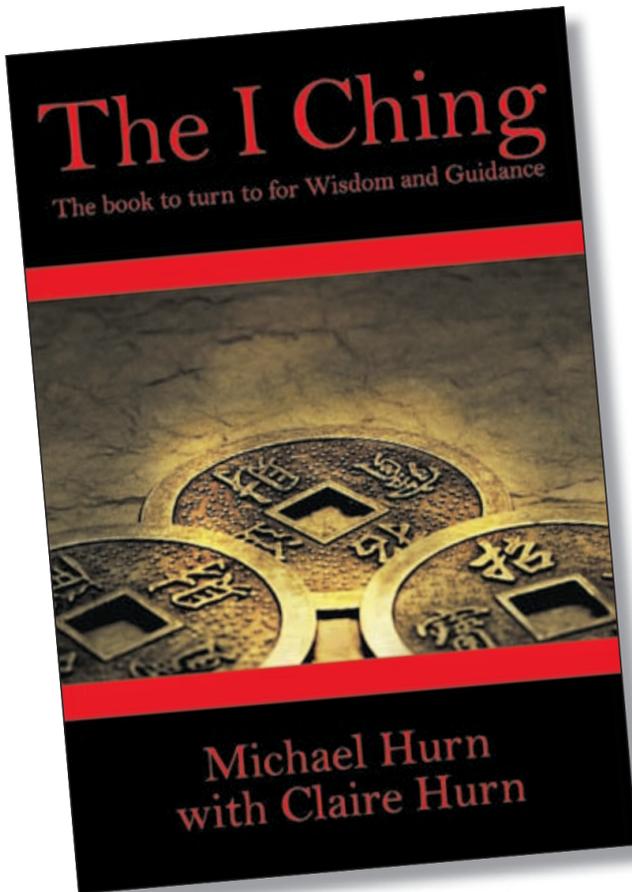
His book, *The I Ching, The book to turn to for wisdom and guidance* was published last year and he exhibited it on the publisher's stand at the Beijing International Book Fair.

The I Ching is a book of wisdom and guidance that has been in use in one form or another in China for over 5,000 years. It is still very relevant today's world. People can ask it questions and amazingly, the answers they get back are very intuitive and helpful. *The I Ching* does not give yes/no answers but it will give suggestions as to which direction to follow and a hint as to how a situation could look in the future.

It helps, but it is not essential to have question in mind when consulting the *I Ching*. Questions could be about a particular situation in your life, job, career, relationship, about kids or family. Then, while thinking about your question or pondering your general situation, take three dice or three coins and over six throws create a stack of broken and solid lines called a hexagram. Each throw of the dice will generate a broken or a solid line.

In traditional *I Ching* books you need to take that hexagram and refer to a look-up table to find the hexagram number. Then flick through the book to find the hexagram page, where finally you can read the text that goes with the hexagram. The hexagram texts provide the answers to the questions being asked.

For over 30 years Mike has had a fascination with the *I Ching* and helping others to access its wisdom to help them with their daily lives. He noticed that at first,



new users of the *I Ching* were not happy using the look-up tables. They found them annoying and tricky to use and reported that it spoiled their enjoyment of using the *I Ching*. This started him thinking about ways to simplify the process of looking up hexagrams.

When I first met Mike, I felt that he was an interesting person to interact with because of his unique and fun way of seeing life and solving puzzles and problems. He was involved in a very specialized aspect of the IT industry and I wondered if this could have anything to do with it. He was also a very frustrated man who was always coming up with great ideas, but could not seem to get his thoughts out on paper. It was driving him crazy!

I wanted to help him so we talked about his ideas and ambitions and I took a look at the few notes he had managed to scribble down. I knew he was a really intelligent person, but what I saw looked like gibberish and was really hard to read and follow. This made me ask myself if I was looking at the work of a dyslexic. Sure enough, formal testing verified my theory. Mike was so relieved to finally know what was wrong.

As our relationship has developed, so has our writing partnership. Over the years, Mike has learned to work around his dyslexia and unlock his ideas. If all else fails I step in and type while he dictates. However, early on, we realized that improving the English had to be dealt with after dictation. On several occasions we nearly came to blows when I

tried to turn it into English while he was dictating his ideas!

Mike never stopped being interested in the *I Ching* and a few years after finding out he was dyslexic Mike was finally able to make progress on a way to simplify looking up hexagrams.

Hexagrams form patterns, but in King Wen's layout of the book they are not easy to see. When Mike tried his idea of resequencing the hexagrams, their lines became very visible as a series of patterns at the edge of a page. So then he came up with the idea of flicking through the pages of a book to find the hexagram by pattern recognition. We tried this out using a card index system and found that it was possible to quickly and easily find the hexagram and its text by pattern recognition. We eventually had a test copy printed so that we could try flicking real pages.

Now that the idea was out of his head, we rapidly began to understand that in order to make these changes we would need to write our own version of the *I Ching*.

My role of helper expanded and I became editor, coffee maker, typist and walking dictionary. At first, I thought I would just be editing Mike's work. However, when I came to the hexagram text I found that he only had a few working notes. Therefore, with his input I had to write my own versions of the text. We went over every hexagram together to make sure that our work was copyright safe and that the traditional messages of the hexagrams were not lost.

It has taken us quite a few years to complete the book as life also had to be lived. Along the way, we gained personal experience of many of the life situations that people ask the *I Ching* about. We had long periods of unemployment, relying on the Food Bank, being in debt, births, deaths, moving house, family issues, serious health issues ... and so on. Being immigrants to Cana-

da, we have lived through most of this with no one but each other to turn to.

Many times, we have been very thankful to have a copy of the *I Ching* handy on our bookshelf. Like a loyal friend, it has given us comfort, wisdom and guidance and even saved our sanity on occasion. Coping with all of this has made us more determined to get this book out there for those of us who have no one to turn to for help.

Hence our book is dedicated "to everyone; who at some time in their lives (like ourselves), have found that they have no one to ask for advice or are in a situation that they would rather not discuss with anyone."

We have been very lucky with our publisher, Strategic Publishing Group. Because this book has very specific layout requirements, their technical teams allowed Mike to design it himself and they worked with him as needed. This was necessary for both the paper and the e-book versions.

The book has become extremely well travelled. Last year Mike had the opportunity to attend an exhibit at the Beijing International Book Fair with our publishers. He was worried as to how a simplified Western version of the *I Ching* would be received in China. He need not have worried. He felt welcome wherever he went. When he demonstrated how the book works on the stand, people really liked his changes. It turns out that some Chinese people also have problems with traditional copies of the *I Ching*. He was approached for the Chinese language rights but the publishers have warned us that it could be a long time before anything happens.

To date, the book is available in printed form and e-book form. The text and its sequence are also available for purchase as an app on the iPhone and iPad. For more information please see www.theichingbook.com.

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