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**SECTIONS:**

[Front Page](#)

[Today's News](#)

[Information Technology](#)

[Teaching](#)

[Publishing](#)

[Money](#)

[Government & Politics](#)

[Community Colleges](#)

[Science](#)

[Students](#)

[Athletics](#)

[International](#)

[People](#)

[Events](#)

[The Chronicle Review](#)

[Jobs](#)

**FEATURES:**

[Colloquy](#)

[Colloquy Live](#)

[Magazines & Journals](#)

[Grants & Fellowships](#)

[Facts & Figures](#)

[Issues in Depth](#)

[Site Sampler](#)

**CHRONICLE IN PRINT:**

[This Week's Issue](#)

[Back Issues](#)

[Related Materials](#)

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WORLD BEAT

Taiwan Court Acquits Professor of Obscenity Charges Stemming From Online Database on Deviant Sex

By JEN LIN-LIU

A court has acquitted a professor in Taiwan of charges filed against her by conservative groups who had accused her of spreading obscene materials on the Internet.

Josephine Ho, founder and coordinator of the Center for the Study of Sexualities at National Central University was found not guilty by the Taipei District Court.

"I am relieved that the court was sensible enough to make this decision; it takes a lot of moral courage to rule against the moral hysteria," Ms. Ho wrote in an e-mail message.

Taiwan's Publications Appraisal Foundation, which lobbies the government to censor publications it deems "harmful to children," filed the lawsuit on behalf of Ms. Ho's critics, which included several religious and educational groups.

The plaintiffs objected to Ms. Ho's university-affiliated databank on deviant sexual behavior, which contained a hyperlink that led to a Web site -- not run by Ms. Ho -- showing photos of bestiality.

In a statement, the foundation said Ms. Ho's "irresponsible academic research and negative social education has hurt all of society." Ms. Ho said that the databank was aimed at an academic audience and was not for the general public.

If found guilty, Ms. Ho could have faced a maximum of two years in prison or a \$30,000 fine.

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Section: International

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