

My Experience with the Honor Fellowship Library Study Tour

Motoko Hori

1. Introduction

In November of 2010, I was fortunate enough to attend a 3-week overseas study tour, as part of the Honor Fellowship program, which is supported by the estate of the late Mr. Jack Honor and his wife. Since the establishment in 1999 of an agreement between the Japan Library Association, and the Arizona Library Association, every year librarians are sent overseas to promote understanding of the circumstances in libraries, and interaction among librarians.

2. About the Training

During the training, I visited 20 outstanding public, special, and academic libraries in each area, crossing from the Tucson to Flagstaff. In each facility, librarians guided and explained about their libraries. In addition, I was able to attend the annual conference of the Arizona Library Association.

3-1. AZLA Conference and Library Tour

During 3 days of the conference, highly motivated librarians from all over the world gathered. They each chose to attend the sessions in which they were most interested. They had lectures, and exchanged opinions. Participants and lecturers both discussed and shared their ideas. I saw each librarian try to acquire new knowledge and ideas from this conference to make use of the information for their own libraries.

In the preconference, I attended a tour of two new branch libraries in Scottsdale. Their architects came with us and explained the concept and plan of the building. The Arabian Library has an entry passage and courtyard, which displayed stunning imagery of "Slot Canyon", and a quiet reading room, from which we could see beautiful mountain views. The Appaloosa Library has beautiful walls that change color from green to purple as people pass by, and it has a bright reading room. Both libraries have cute and colorful children's play and reading area. These buildings were built for ecology; they used several recycled materials and made big windows so that natural sunshine fills the halls, reducing the use of electricity. What surprised me is that there were vending machines in the library. Recently, libraries where users can eat and drink are getting popular and the number of these libraries is increasing. I was impressed to see every library full of users, and they each looked happy and comfortable being there. It seemed like libraries are part of their daily lives.

3-2. NAU (Northern Arizona University) "Special Collections and Archives Department"

I visited the Northern Arizona University Cline Library Special Collections and Archives. They have kept and managed various archival materials regarding the history of Colorado such as “Colorado River and the Grand Canyon”, “Native American History and Culture”, and “Economic Development”. They have several million items in various forms, including letters, diaries, photographs, oral history interviews, and films, in addition to books. As a private collection, the person’s pictures, history, family, and even clothes have been preserved. The temperature and humidity in the storeroom are strictly managed, and more valuable items are stored and managed in lower temperature, via refrigeration. Any materials that are or could be damaged are repaired or treated to prevent degradation. They use folder files and boxes that are made from acid-free paper, and affix information such as title, medium, folder number, and rack number, for easy management via database. Furthermore, digital images are made by scanner and preserved as well, so that library users can see the index and the real images when they search materials on the database. There are security cameras, which can take videos from every angle in the reading room. Users are not allowed to eat, drink, or bring a bag or even a pencil into this room. The facility has been maintained perfectly in every process from choosing, acquiring, and repairing materials to preserving materials, with the management of an archivist who had special knowledge about repairing and preserving special items.

3-3. Arizona Memory Project

The Arizona Memory Project comprehensively manages the archives of state libraries, museums, and cultural facilities. They provide the pictures, maps, and government references on a website which features Arizona’s past and present. This project was started in 2006, and about 50 facilities in Arizona State participated so far. Since this project started, people have gotten the opportunity to see valuable items, which had been in the bottom of the library stock room. Even the smaller facilities, which have limitations in exhibiting and managing those materials on their own website by themselves due to budget constraints, got the chance to provide and show their materials by participating in this project. Moreover, for the person who is looking for references in a specific field, this project enables to search pictures and maps which were not in a database, and were not easy to identify before. It made our lives very convenient. Most of the libraries and museums that I visited in Arizona participated in this project. An archivist told me that if the archivists, curators, and librarians can cooperate to acquire, share, preserve, and manage the materials together, it would be very convenient and great opportunity not only for preserving valuable materials but also for users.

4. Conclusion

What I felt through this study tour is American libraries have a high standard of conversion to

electronics, and librarians have special knowledge and a higher level of skill. Electronic equipment is being installed, even in public libraries. Of course it's common that colleges and public libraries have large number of computers, but in addition, they lend out iPads and E-book readers, such as Kindle. The website of each library is being developed and they provide advanced services. For example, users can see images or full texts of items from home by searching for them on the internet, and the reference service is available by email and chat room.

Another thing that impressed me was that librarians have passion to learn new things. Some of them who I met have job but at the same time they go to a library school or a graduate school to get a higher degree, and some librarians have participated in trainings and lectures to understand advanced systems and acquire the skills for new technologies. I was really surprised by people who have the desire to keep learning or acquire knowledge. Additionally, library users have understood librarians well, so I felt that librarians are regarded as experts who are respected and needed by people. I thought the librarian's effort made such circumstances and what each librarian has kept studying with the goal and pride would provide more advanced service. This study tour became my unforgettable experience. People who belong to the Arizona Library Association set up this enhanced 3-week program for me, during which, I could visit advanced academic, public, and special libraries and have conversation with many librarians. People in Arizona were all very gentle. I really appreciate the people who took such great care of me. I want to make the best use of this valuable experience later in my life. Finally, I'd simply like to say to all concerned, that I sincerely appreciate you and your kindness. Thank you so much!

Motoko Hori with Heather Clayton



East Flagstaff Public Library Anime Club