

Double Rainbow Seen at Flinders: Report on the Field Trip to Flinders University Library

INU Shadowing Program

When Ms Emori, the leader of our group, asked me if I wanted to try “Shadowing program” (a training program for administrators at senior and middle level) provided by INU (International Network of Universities), I was frozen for a moment, being caught in a dilemma between two thoughts; “I’d love to” and “but I’m not confident in my English to accomplish the task”. INU is a consortium of universities and, in Japan, Ritsumeikan University and Hiroshima University are the only members.

The reasons why I wanted to participate in this program are: 1. Since, at that time, I was a chief reference librarian at Reference Service Department, assisting patrons with their research difficulties, I wanted to learn and actually see the reference service, especially the expertise of liaison librarians in advanced libraries. 2. Since it was about time for us to consider having an integrated space for both information technology (PCs) and library itself (like so-called Learning Commons or Information Commons), I thought it would be a great chance to examine our own services closely and objectively through the program.

After all, as soon as I got the news that Mr. Chris O'Malley was coming from Flinders University Library to our library for Staff Exchange Program during summer, I chose Flinders University Library as my host university, forgetting all about my poor English ability.

For my English improvement

As described well in detail in the article of Hiroshima University Library Magazine “Liaison”, vol. 33, Mr. Chris O'Malley from Flinders did a great job last summer. Not to mention his immeasurable contribution to our library, but also, to my surprise, he kindly offered to be an instructor for my English training course. Since I had been so busy during the semester that I didn't get around to reading the requirements for the applicants, I was taken by astonishment when I learnt later on that I'd have to give a presentation in English to the librarians at Flinders University Library. On this matter, too, Chris gave me a great deal of advice, even though he didn't have much time before his stay period was over.

As for the application procedure, International Planning and Cooperation Group in the International Affairs Bureau helped me wholeheartedly. Having such supportive colleagues, I finally flew to Australia for the program from November the 17th to 28th.

We are similar

With both the information from Chris and my first impression at Flinders, the resemblance between Hiroshima University and Flinders University was clear. In Australia, the Australian National University is the only university established by Federal Parliament. Flinders University is one of the public universities established in each state.

The sizes of both university such as the number of its constituents, departments and faculties are about the same. During the preparation for my presentation, I discovered that our ranks in the world are also very close; the rank of Flinders is 273rd, and Hiroshima 267th, according to the magazine “Times Higher Educational Supplements 2008”. Flinders has been improving its ranking every year, which shows clearly that it's an up-and-coming university.

Another similarity I found out was the blessed natural environment. Both universities stand on the outskirts of the city, and the buildings are built around the ponds. We both have several libraries on the campus, from each of which

we provide appropriate services to the patrons. I felt extremely fortunate in being able to visit the advanced library with lots of similarities with us.

So Organized

I was walking toward the center of the campus of Flinders University to have a lunch by the pond when Chris, who was eating his lunch sitting on the lawn, asked me to join him. I put my handkerchief on the lawn before I sit, then Chris said, "So organized". We smiled at each other. On the previous day, when I used the word "systematic" to express my compliment for the rationalized and efficient administration and governance systems of their library, Chris corrected the word "systematic" to "organized". My impression on the administration, services, and careful consideration for my training program given by Flinders University Library can be expressed only by this very word "organized". As for my program, Ms Helen Culshaw, the contact person, carefully arranged the schedule for me to have job explanations by each section leader, staff training workshops by the librarians, and on-site job experience at the reference desk, which were all wonderfully organized and helped me to grasp the general description of the activities of each section.

Fruits or Seeds

This program has given me so many things, and I cannot write everything in words here.

My English language ability, which should have been improved, has not seen much difference, but interestingly I've become fearless of using English in any situation.

The biggest improvement for me was mastering various ways to use a personal computer such as; webmailing at Narita Airport, wireless access on campus, VPN remote access to Hiroshima University, English presentation by using PowerPoint, and broadband internet access at hotels. Surprisingly, now I carry my laptop with me and actually use it, which I had never even dreamed of without INU training program.

With regard to library services at Flinders University, Mr. Ian McBain, University Librarian, has surely been realizing ideas and developing plans taken over from the former University Librarian Mr. Bill Cations; such as development of services provided by liaison librarians including Course Reserve Services in electronic forms, and Learning Commons (which we are now developing in the Central Library in Higashi Hiroshima Campus, so it was a great opportunity to ask for some advice on the planning).

What was even more meaningful for me was my discovery of the fact that there were many librarians over the sea dedicated to improving their services with such strong awareness as professional librarians, which certainly we have in common.

Now my task in Hiroshima University is to think if it is possible to realize or how to make the most effective use of each one of advanced services that I learnt at Flinders.

Double Rainbow

The last day of my training program happened to be the last day of the semester. The library was close earlier than usual although it was open through the night on the previous day.

Trying to suppress a mixture of overflowing feelings such as gratitude for hospitality and thoughtfulness given by staff at Flinders in my heart and sadness for the fact I should leave so soon, I quickly finished packing. When I went outside and walked up to the bus stop, I saw a rainbow after the rain in the sky. It was a double rainbow which I'd

never seen before. It's said that a double rainbow will bring us a good luck. It brought tears to my eyes because it looked as if it had given me a blessing. Now looking back on it, I feel that the rainbow was trying to give me some encouragement in myself after the training program.

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Hiroko Takahashi

Chief, Higashi-Hiroshima Area Circulation
Community Collaboration and Information Policy Office
Library Information Distribution Group
Hiroshima University

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