

MEMBER AND SECTOR NEWS



Chai (Charles) Yun and Zhang (May) Xiaomei at the State Library of SA.
Image: Jenny Scott, State Library of SA

FROM SHANDONG TO SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The State Library of South Australia and Shandong Provincial Library signed an agreement in May 2015 to promote cultural exchanges and cooperation between the two libraries. Personnel exchange is an important part of the agreement, and ZHANG (MAY) XIAOMEI and CHAI (CHARLES) YUN were chosen as library interns to study in South Australia.

Shandong Provincial Library is a National First Class Public Library in China and also a National Key Preservation Unit of Ancient Books. Zhang (May) Xiaomei works in the Shandong Local Literature Centre and is responsible for information retrieval services, exhibition preparation and literature publication related to Shandong.

Chai (Charles) Yun works in the foreign language department of the library, where he is mainly in charge of foreign language book circulation, Human Library activities, and arrangement and research of South Manchurian materials.

Since we started our internship in the State Library of South Australia, we have gained a general understanding of the library's structure, work mode, service concepts, strategic plan and also the collections, internet systems and exhibitions. We also learned about the service concept and operational process of the One Card network during our visits to local public libraries. We were observers at a Libraries Board meeting where policy issues were discussed, and we learned a great deal about the governance and management of the public library network.


Because of the industry partnership between the State Library and the University of South Australia, we were able to study a number of library and information management courses. Another unforgettable experience was our Flinders Ranges trip, on which we saw the natural beauty of the South Australian outback and learned about the customs of Aboriginal people.

Ten weeks of study enabled us to learn a great deal. The State Library has a strong commitment to local heritage. Its oral history project is a good example, in which the past comes to life as people share the stories of their lives. As part of this project we were given an opportunity to interview the editor of a local Chinese newspaper, enriching the library's information about the paper for its collections. Shandong Province has a long history, and the oral history project has inspired us to record and preserve our local memories when we return to our workplace.

The meticulously prepared exhibitions of the State Library's collections left a deep impression on us. 'A Theatre Inside the Book', for example, showcased pop-up books, using clear themes and beautifully designed

posters. An ebook was also made for customers to interact with, and the online and offline activities complemented each other, attracting more customers. In addition to the physical collections, the State Library's contribution to the national PANDORA Archive focuses on selecting and archiving South Australian online publications, aiming to build a comprehensive collection of local publications to ensure that South Australians – and all Australians – have access to their digital heritage now and in the future.

The industry partnership with the University of South Australia's Library and Information Management and Archives and Records Management program is also interesting. A number of courses in the program are delivered on-site at the State Library by SLSA staff, combining theory with practical first-hand experience and examples from the collections. For example, the 'Accessing Resources' course demonstrates first-hand how the library cares about its customers, and the information desk provides the focal point where librarians model and practise the skills of the reference interview. And the experience of visiting a toy library in a public library surprised us, as it subverts the stereotype of a typical library. We learned how early experiences are crucial for the brain development of children, and that boldly coloured toys can provide great advantages together with children's books.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the State Library of South Australia and Shandong Provincial Library, who gave us this rare and valuable study opportunity. We also want to thank to the lovely colleagues of the State Library of South Australia, public libraries, the Department of State Development and the University of South Australia. Everyone took good care of us and your hospitality impressed us deeply – we made some really good friends here. In the near future, Shandong Library's precious ancient books will be exhibited in the State Library of South Australia, and we wish the exhibition every success. Future exchanges will provide further opportunities for our libraries and staff to learn from each other. 

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