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Internship at Nicholson Museum- Report

I interned at the Nicholson Museum from the 1st of July to the 2nd of August, working 5 days a week. The Nicholson Museum, located within the Campus of University of Sydney, was an antiquity museum which housed Classical items from Greece, Egypt, Cyprus etc. Below is a brief introduction to the museum:

“The Nicholson Museum is home to the largest collection of antiquities in Australia and the Southern Hemisphere. Our gallery is located in the historic Main Quadrangle at the University of Sydney. Admission is free. All are welcome.

The museum was founded in 1860 by Sir Charles Nicholson, (Chancellor 1854-1862), with a significant donation from his private collection of artifacts and curiosities. Since this time the collection has been expanded through donations, bequests and archaeological excavations led by Dame Kathleen Kenyon, Sir Flinders Petrie, James Stewart to name but a few. There are great stories to be told and fascinating histories to be relived. From the intriguing to the macabre, Australia's oldest University museum gives a fascinating insight into the daily lives of past civilizations and into the minds of the archaeologists, collectors and curators who have made it all possible.” (<http://sydney.edu.au/museums/collections/nicholson.shtml>)

Below are the tasks that I performed during my stay with them.

1) Stock-taking of artifacts

Our museum collection is the largest in the southern hemisphere, and we house more than a few thousand items. Obviously, not all of them could be displayed in the museum all at once. Most of them are stored in an underground basement. Every 5 years, we would perform a stock take in which we check each individual artifact against the computer database. All the artifacts have a unique registration number, and it was our job to make sure it had one and that it was on the correct place of storage. During the process, I also learnt a great deal from my supervisor on how to handle artifacts. I was taught the proper way to hold them and the different techniques that were used to restore them. It was a very repetitive job as there were many artifacts to go through, but it was definitely rewarding as it was the only time you could actually get close and touch the artifacts.

2) Database updating

Another important part of my job was to update the database which digitally recorded all our collections. I was responsible for taking digital pictures of each artifact and uploading it onto the database. We did this because if the artifacts were ever stolen or got misplaced, we would know what it looked like and have proof that it belonged to us.

3) Referencing

In the 60s, the curator back then published a book that documented the display we had back then. He wrote lengthily on each artifact regarding its origin, appearance and significance to the museum. Since there are a lot of people using our museum for research, it was important that they could digitally search up such information. One of my tasks was to go through the entire book and transfer the relevant paragraphs onto the pages of the corresponding artifact in the database.

4) Reception

I was stationed at the front desk for a few days as well. My duties included managing the souvenir shop, restocking our merchandise, keeping track of the amount of visitors and answering any inquiries from the visitors.

5) Event assisting

I was very lucky as I was able to participate in the opening of a major event. Below is the description of said event:

“Following on from the extraordinary success of the LEGO Colosseum in 2012, the Brickman, Ryan McNaught, has turned his hand to one of the most iconic architectural monuments of Ancient Greece - The Acropolis!

The LEGO model displays the Acropolis both as it was in the fifth century BC and as it is today as one of Greece's most popular tourist attractions. Captured in LEGO are some of the Acropolis' more famous visitors including Pericles, Lord Elgin, Dame Agatha Christie, and even Elton John.

Also on display is the museum's 19th century model of the acropolis, which captured the acropolis as it stood in 1895 in plaster.”

(http://sydney.edu.au/museums/events_exhibitions/nicholson_exhibitions.shtml)

#LegoAcropolis)

On that day, we had more than 2,000 visitors, many of which were children who came to see the Lego model. We also invited the Greek Society who came with traditional Greek/Roman soldier uniforms and weapons. They performed and explained to the public how the ancient Greeks/Romans used to live.

Overall, even though I only stayed with them for a short period of a month, I was occupied every day with different tasks. The experience I got was exceptionally rare as there are almost no museums in Hong Kong that housing that much ancient antiquity from the Classical period.

