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When you want something you've never had, you have to do something you've never done.

(Thomas Jefferson)



The Nicholson Museum

Working in a museum is like being one of the bricks of the bridge which connects past to present. It is what, I believe, brings a huge difference from working in any other workplace, and is as well my motivation to work every day during my ten-weeks stay in Sydney. I have been very fortunate that my advisor at the Nicholson Museum gives me a great variety of work related to events that are taking place at the Museum. From entertaining visitors at the front-desk, to translating catalogue and information of exhibitions; from updating datas using the Emu system, to actually taking photos of artefacts for their digitalisation projects...Through carrying out the tasks, each has demonstrated to me the knowledge and skills that contribute to the functioning of a museum.

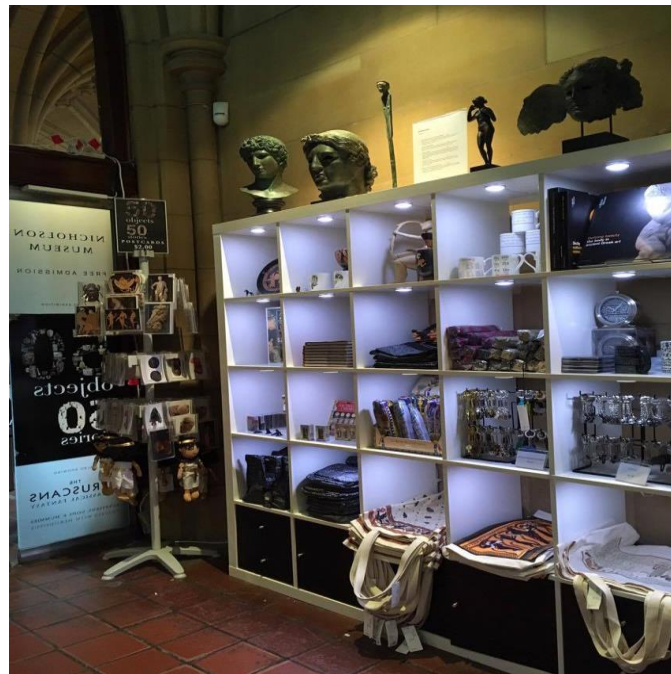
Daily Management of the Museum:

Like any customer-based shops, the NM also puts an emphasis on customer experience. Each morning, I work with the other volunteers at the museum to remove the fingerprints on the display cabinets. We were taught how to distinguish glass from Perspex only by looking and the trails that may be left on them if we misuse the cleaning items. Interestingly, from the dusting process, we know which exhibition attracts visitors more and from the theme and location of the exhibition, we also understand why.



The Lego Pompeii

One of my duties is to serve at the front-desk duties if the respective volunteer does not show up. Being an Anthropology student, I actually consider it a great chance for observation. Moreover, interestingly, some of the visitors would relate the NM to the British Museum because the products in NM are actually produced by the British Museum. In fact, after talking to the staff at NM about the issue, I discover that this is a common practice among small museums due to a lack of funds.



At the end of each day, I usually help with the closing of the museum, and clean up the Lego area in it. Indeed, I think it is very wise and interactive to set up the Lego area next to the exhibition of the Lego Pompeii. Instead of merely asking people to keep off from the Lego exhibition, the curator understands the urge of people in touching Legos after seeing the magnificent display, hence putting the Lego area there.



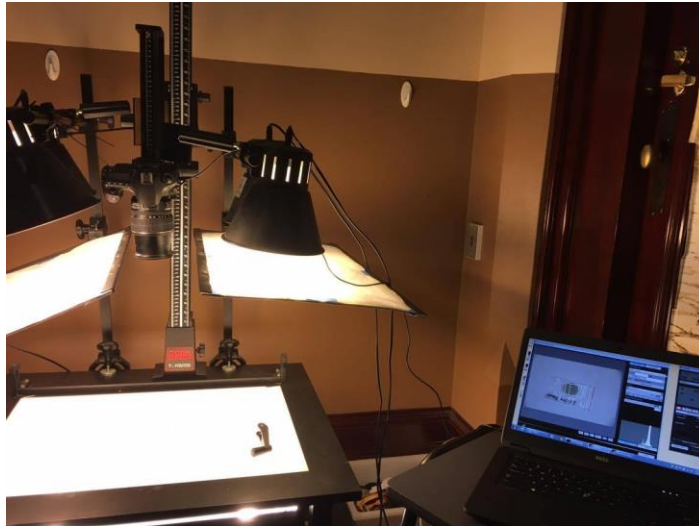
The Lego Area next to the Lego Pompeii

Digitalization Project:

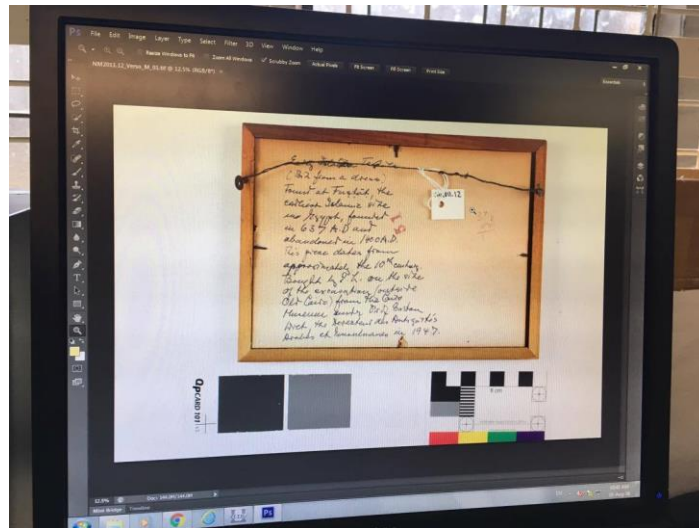
The museum has made use of advanced technology in various manners, such as the use of Ipads in exhibition as well as digitalization of the museum collections. The NM has decided to put their collections on their website so that on one hand, people can have a good grasp of them without physically being in the museum. On the other hand, it also attracts people to go to the museum to take a closer look at specific items they are interested in. To assist the project, I take photos of seals dated back to the ancient Roman time. Some of the seals are made of plasters while some are metal. They were used mainly on business transactions and served as chops nowadays. Simply looking at the intriguing use of patterns and symbols on the seals is a rewarding experience; yet being able to touch the rings with seals attached sends me onto a magic carpet. It is always fascinating to look at jewels, because they reveal not just the fashion of that period of time, but also some of people's biological features. For instance, I noticed the ancient Romans had incredibly skinny fingers. In addition, I am also responsible for entering data and updating photos into the Emu system, which is like a digitalized area for all the archives.



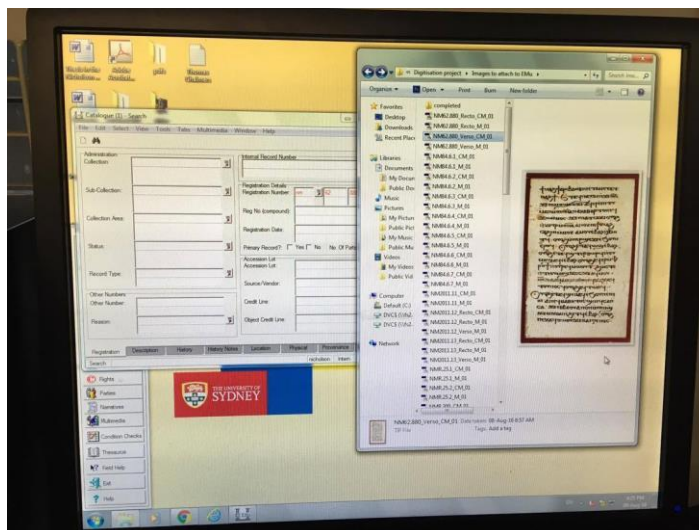
One of the plaster seals



Set-up of the photo-taking process



Papyrus with clear markings



Data-entry using Emu system

Translation Jobs:

The number of Asian visitors, especially Chinese, has increased a lot in last few years. To make it more visitor-friendly, the museum has decided to add in Chinese translation to their exhibition texts. I am responsible for the translation of the Lego hotspots of the Pompeii exhibition, and the monuments of the Memento exhibition. I am quite excited to be able to help out, yet at the same time feeling a bit drowned in a whirlpool of emotions, for I fear the translation work would not be good enough.



Lego Pompeii exhibition



The Memento exhibition

Working in the NM has been truly rewarding and I really have learnt so much about the multiple aspects of Museum operations. There are indeed more tasks assigned during the internship, and I chose to elaborate on the above ones because they exhibit a wide range of skills, which in my opinion, are quite representative. Once again, I really enjoy the work experience and needless to mention the cultural exposure I have received. Last but not least, I would like to thank the Department of Anthropology in the Chinese university of Hong Kong for the precious opportunity and their immense support. I will never stop learning and hopefully will always remain anthropological and be observant in no matter what field my future leads me.

Some other photos taken:



Glass slides dates back to the 1950s