2025 Anthropology Summer Internship Report
Name: Hui Ching Tung
Institution: Hong Kong Museum of History
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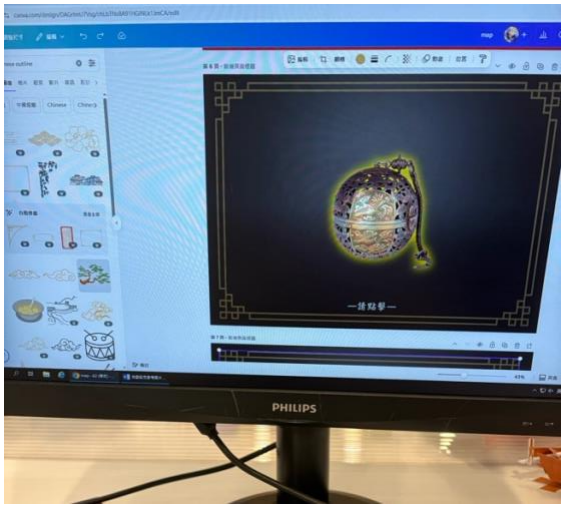
In this summer, I worked as a student intern in Hong Kong Museum of History under Ethnography unit. I was under the supervision of one Assistant Curator I and three Assistant Curator II. I experienced and learned a lot about curation work during this internship.

Creativity and Feasibility

During my internship, the work that I participated the most is the game about the examination system during Tang dynasty. I was told that the team would like to have a game similar to the show "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?" that allows the public to answer questions about Sui and Tang dynasties.

Before I started the work, my impression of games in museum are not very positive as I always thought that they are too boring. Thus, I was quite motivated to plan games that are different from the usual. The goals of the game are to educate people about the structure of the examination system in Tang dynasty and allow people to learn more about the Sui and Tang history while answering the questions.



Working on the outline and designs

My first task is to come up with an outline of the game. At first, I was very eager to

use my creativity to make the game more attractive. I searched for the popular culture that can be used and tried to combine it with the game. My first idea is to add a part of rhythm game to increase the difficulty and diversity of the game. I also set different types of questions to recreate how the students in the past can choose different subjects. However, I ignored the feasibility of the ideas. Of course, government departments can afford more resources than students' works, yet there are still limits.

Setting up different types of questions meaning that we will need to prepare a much larger number of questions in our question bank. Each question needs to be related to the topic and to be fact checked which requires a certain period of time. The idea of adding rhythm game will make things more complicated and too lengthy. Then I realised that I have been focusing too much on merging different ideas but ignored the feasibility. This is not an assignment but a real project that will be implemented. It was nice to try novel ideas, but a curator should also notice the feasibility of events.

Education and professionalism

While learning public archaeology in archaeology courses, I remembered a reading mentioned about how the public and archaeologists are separated from those specialised terms and knowledge. Yet I did not fully understand this idea until I joined this internship.

After finishing the outline and research, I started preparing the question bank. The question should be related to Sui and Tang dynasties. Preparing 120 questions was way more harder than I thought. Of course there are many details in this important period, but not all of them are suitable for making a question. I remember that while I was struggling on making questions, Ms. Lai (Assistant Curator I)gave me an advice, "We hope that people can learn something from the questions."

Perhaps this was just a very ordinary suggestion, yet it struck a chord with me. Originally, to create questions, I selected contents from "The Nine Chapters on the Mathematical Art" and other background story of historical figures as questions. But after Ms. Lai's suggestion, I suddenly realized that although those questions were entertaining, they didn't allow participants to take away any knowledge.

After revising my questions, I submitted them to Mr. Choi (Assistant Curator II) for review. His feedback highlighted that many were too difficult and overly controversial. By controversial, he meant that the factors and significance of historical events vary greatly depending on individual perspectives. As a student, I often see questions that ask for “the most important factor” in my assignments. However, as curators, we should show the impact of various historical events without rashly declaring any single one as “most important.” Therefore, it will be better to select questions with fixed answers. This also reminded me that I need to be more considerate during my work.

The third lesson I learned was about overly difficult questions. Since the beginning of my internship, I had been somewhat nervous. This was especially true regarding the materials I submitted. Although I knew they would undergo multiple reviews and confirmations before use, I still worried about making mistakes. To me, a museum represented a government institution demanding utmost professionalism. This mindset led me to unconsciously incorporate more advanced knowledge when designing questions, hoping to demonstrate expertise. This approach, however, made the questions feel more like challenges—even if students saw the correct answers, they might not gain meaningful knowledge from them. I learned that curation must always consider its target audience. For museums, sparking the public’s interest—especially among children—is crucial. While the knowledge presented must remain accurate, it should avoid excessive complexity. A museum's purpose is not just showing information but to educate people through the information.

Other works

Beyond content planning, I was fortunate to experience other museum management tasks: organizing collections, collecting donations, observing exhibition dismantling, and conducting monthly cleanings at Law Uk Folk Museum.

Regarding collections, I was honored to take a look the storage room and assist with organizing photographs. Being able to see these precious artifacts closely was an invaluable experience. The daily organization based on inventory lists made me appreciate how this work demands intense concentration and meticulous attention to

detail. I also accompanied Mr. Choi (Assistant Curator II) to donor's home to collect their donations. From signing agreements to taking measurements and photographs and finally packing and transporting the donated pieces carefully, each step felt remarkably interesting.

Storage room in HKMH

Regarding monthly cleaning, I had assumed it would be handled by janitors. However, it was cleaned by the conservation unit, with us doing the final checking. I must admit I underestimated how meticulously collections should be preserved. These were tasks I hadn't realized required attention beyond just indoor duties.

Conclusion

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to all the people who guided me during my internship especially for the ones in Ethnography unit. Rather than simply working there, it felt more like they took me around to experience different aspects of the work. They generously shared their own work experiences and daily routines. While I couldn't be of much help in many tasks, I'm still deeply grateful that they took the time out of their busy schedules to show me around, explaining their work in detail.

This internship was undoubtedly a valuable experience. It gave me a deeper insight into museum operations and significantly increased my interest in museums.