2025 Department of Anthropology Summer Internship Report

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Internship: 18/6/2025 – 15/8/2025 (200 hours)

Let me preface this report by mentioning that this is not my first time doing an internship offered by the Department, as I have undergone an internship in a museum in my Year 1, you can check the report by scrolling down to the '2023' section of the website. I enrolled this internship because I felt like I didn't really learn much from it. It is true that I have gained a lot of knowledge in museum operations, but everything seems too smooth sailing to me, I did what I am good at and didn't really feel a sense of challenge that would have otherwise improved myself as a person.

I will illustrate this through an example. In my first to second weeks, one of my important tasks was to make a call to invite important personnel to join our opening show. As I work in a government department, it means that the people I need to call are mostly high-ranking government officials and legislative councillors. Although I am supplied with a guideline on how to introduce our office, as well as a list of potential questions I have to answer, I also have a great social anxiety myself. In my first day doing this task, I have to constantly rehearse to myself, cool down a considerable amount of time after each call, and take more toilet breaks than usual. It is really shameful when I find out that my colleague did the phone call list probably twice as fast as me after I was praised by my supervisor by doing really fast on a separate task. However, I eventually got the ropes and cut down most of the downtime by developing a mental template. Most people accepting my call are really nice office workers, with a few of them being disgruntled and a separate instance where I accidentally called the personal mobile number of a councillor. By putting on an act as a respectful and attentive worker, I managed to finish my task unscathed. It is a memorable experience for me.

Back to my internship, I worked with 5 other interns and 3 Festival Assistants (FAs) to ensure the smooth running for this years' International Arts Carnival, accepting requests from different Assistant Managers. Each of the interns and FAs were also assigned to a few specific programmes and took part in on-site assistance. In regular days, we worked in the

office and handled work such as preparing signages and posters, managing brochure distribution, and handling relevant records. I was also assigned to specific tasks such as creating guidebooks for overseas performers, taking note of the stock list, and doing website-related tasks. The last one is quite worth mentioning as this is a task I have 'earned' myself. During downtime in one of the days, I have noticed some issues regarding the websites redirection and reported it to my supervisor, she then tasked me to document them and notify the contractor, after which she also gave me similar tasks. It is really fulfilling for me not only I can put my abilities into use (I am minoring in Computer Science), but also that said ability was being noticed by my supervisor who allowed me to shine.

Onto the on-site duties, I was only assigned to 1 programme, the least for any intern and FAs. It was a musical drama based on a bestselling agent novel in Hong Kong. The caveat is that I was the only intern/FA for that show. Therefore, although I don't have much chance for on-site duties, the few ones I had were incredibly memorable. The first duty for me was to assist in an outreach programme, which was a free snippet of the performance demonstrated to the public in a shopping mall in order to advertise for the Carnival. Since there are multiple programmes to be demonstrated in the outreach programme, I get to work with other interns on-site, which I expected to go smoothly. However unexpectedly, when I was walking around the still-gated venue, nervously handing brochures to those who were interested, a group of elderly people called out to me. They complained to me that there was no queue and feared for the potential chaos when the venue was opened. I have notified the Assistant Manager and obtained permission to create a queue. As everyone else had their own tasks, I had to do it alone. Respectfully, I asked the group of elderly on their suggestions. Perhaps sympathizing my plight due to my obvious anxiety, they were really nice to me and even encouraged me when I was persuading others to follow the queue. It was an ad hoc task assigned to me alone, where I am not given any instructions due to its suddenness. By seeking help from strangers respectfully, listening to their suggestions carefully, executing it with a nerve-wrecked heart, I managed to pull it through.

For my most important task, I had to assist for the on-site running of the performance. Most of my tasks involve around setting up the receptionist counter. However, a more daunting task for me was to reach out to the audience after the performance to ask him to scan QR codes to survey and social media accounts. The programme lasts for 3 days. On the first day, as we had many invited guests, many of our Assistant Managers went to help out, who also helped me for the survey. I remembered that after the event, my supervisor

approached and asked me how many survey's I had done, and I answered two. Perhaps understanding my reserved personality, she nonetheless praised and encouraged me. But in actuality, I didn't reach out to two separate people, it was a group of two and they reached out themselves. In the second day, it was a disaster, I can only stand in one corner, weakly asking to the air for scanning our QR codes. The Assistant Manager responsible for the event who was busy dealing with the guests, patiently taught me where to stand during different periods to get more reactions after the event. Due to this major failure, and not wanting to betray the expectations of my superiors who trusted me a lot, I resolved to do better in the third and final day. As I was mildly sick that day, I got the inspiration to wear a facemask, which made me feel oddly calm as I approached to different people and respectfully asking them to scan our codes. I was really proud when I later found out that the programme I was responsible for has one of the higher response counts among the programmes. Although some of these tasks felt really overwhelming to me, not trying to run away from it but to tackle it not by simply braving it through but by ingenuity, and even achieving acceptable to good results, is something I really learnt a lot from this internship.

On the programme itself, perhaps the biggest benefit for interning in Festivals Office is that you can watch the programme you are responsible for free of charge. As International Arts Carnival was oriented towards children, the programme, which was adapted from a novel series targeted towards youths, had to take careful consideration in how to adapt it to be suitable for the different audience group it is targeted to. As an audience, it felt really engaging to piece together the information from the show and deduce the main culprit as well as the attempted method of murder before it was revealed. It is also really inspiring as someone who wishes to work in the arts or arts-adjacent industry.

Finally, and most importantly, are the fellow interns I have the greatest pleasure to work with. Although there are many of us, we worked under an irregular schedule. In many days, I only have 2-3 interns to work with. Therefore, I had to get along with every one of them. Thankfully, they all have been really great people, and I have gradually opened up to them, understanding how to delegate tasks to them as well as helping them. I often have troubles showing my appreciation to others. Therefore, fitting my previous experiences, I sought an alternative way of thanking them, by offering them handmade chocolate ganache along with my thanks. I am really anxious beforehand on how it will be received, but I am glad that they liked it.

I want to end this report by first thanking the Department of Anthropology for giving me a second chance to take an internship, the Festivals Office for accepting me as one of them, and its colleagues for always being so encouraging and patient to me. To conclude, working in the arts administration industry is interesting but also tough. As an organizer, you are sandwiched between the artists and the audience. While they can be nice and respectful, they can also be fickle and demanding. The most important we can do is to respect and listen to them, to make ourselves deserving of their respect. Meanwhile, their efforts can often go unnoticed, its significance in keeping the show running only will be brought up when things go wrong (our survey opinions mostly praise the artists, and a few complaints about our arrangements). It is something I can't really see outside, and only realize it when working as one of them.

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