Rediscovering Hong Kong with mainland students

Zoey Tsang

Many of our CityU colleagues are Hong Kong natives but how well do you actually know Hong Kong? Through the Host-Family®CityU programme organised by the Mainland and External Affairs Office, Ms Chan Pui-fun from the Admissions Office had the chance to rediscover her city with mainland student Chen Jing.

“My home is near the Bethanie (established in 1875 and now the heritage campus of The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts) but I had never thought about visiting it before. One day Chen Jing and I passed the monastery and he was fascinated by its architecture so we went inside. It’s actually a wonderful and unique building,” said Ms Chan.

(continued on next page)
Ms Chan took part in the Host-Family@CityU programme last semester and was assigned to take care of Chen Jing, a Foundation Year student from Yunnan. To help him adapt to student life in Hong Kong and learn more about the society and culture, Ms Chan took him all over Hong Kong and he joined gatherings with her relatives and friends.

“We have been to many places, including The Peak and Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence. Chen Jing is particularly interested in the historical background of places and would often ask me when buildings were constructed. His questions were really challenging,” said Ms Chan. His curiosity prompted her to learn about the places and helped to educate her about her own city.

Chen Jing loves to watch the sea and has high praise for the beautiful mountains. “Perhaps he didn’t have much chance to see the ocean before coming to Hong Kong, as he used to live in the inner city. I had not paid particular attention to the sea or mountains in Hong Kong before but his comments aroused my curiosity to rediscover the beauty of my home city,” said Ms Chan.

Working at the Admissions Office, Ms Chan gets in touch with many mainland students and had her own perceptions about them. However, becoming friends with Chen Jing has changed these notions. “We all know that mainland students are the only child in their family, so they are all well taken care of by their parents.

For example, phone enquiries about admission applications are often made by the parents rather than the students,” she explained.

“Chen Jing, however, is such a mature boy. Each time he comes to my home to dine, he offers help to me. He is also very disciplined and hardworking in his studies. Whenever I call him, he is always studying in the library. In order not to disturb him, I send him SMS instead,” said Ms Chan. She was impressed by the SMS messages sent by Chen Jing during festivals wishing her children good health.

Ms Chan encourages other colleagues to join the host programme. “Some colleagues may think it will take up much of their time but actually it doesn’t. The students in this programme do not live with the host families and this lessens the load on the hosts. On the other hand, the programme enables us to learn more about the culture of non-local students and also helps us rediscover our own city,” she said.

Chen Jing is particularly interested in watching the sea and mountains.

Ms Chan and Chen Jing at the lantern riddle challenge booth during the New Year staff party.
A mathematician’s fondness for Chinese culture

People often associate mathematicians with long and complicated equations littered with peculiar symbols. But this mathematician is also turning his attention to a different kind of symbol: Chinese characters.

At the age of 70 and driven by a passion for Chinese culture, Chair Professor Philippe Ciarlet from the Department of Mathematics started learning Chinese a year and a half ago. On the day ‘Linkage’ interviewed him, Professor Ciarlet had on his desk several pages of his written Chinese for a test to be taken the next day.

Typical of a scientist’s nature, Professor Ciarlet’s fondness for Chinese culture stems from curiosity. He is also fascinated by the fact that Chinese culture has such a long tradition and is responsible for so many scientific discoveries.

He decided that one way to better understand Chinese culture was to learn its language, as it influences how people think and behave and is spoken by more than one billion people. And he is not only trying to learn how to speak, but especially how to write and read.

“Chinese is extremely fascinating but it is also extremely difficult for westerners to learn as there are 3,000 Chinese characters and about 3,000 compounds to learn before being really proficient in this language,” said Professor Ciarlet. Nevertheless, he has devised an excellent way to overcome this challenge – by learning together with his wife.

“We study and practice together. We sometimes ask each other questions and that makes the study a lot more interesting,” he said.

Having spent an average three to four hours a week learning to write and read Chinese over the past year, he has now come to recognise between 300 and 400 characters. His long-range goal is to be able to understand the general idea from an article in Chinese newspapers.

Professor Ciarlet has enjoyed a long relationship with China. He first visited China in 1982 and has commuted between the mainland and France many times since. Over the years, he has witnessed unprecedented changes.

“When I first visited Fudan University in November 1982, there was no heating and we had to wear very thick clothes while teaching. Now it is a lot more modern,” he recalled.

But his relationship with Hong Kong runs even deeper, as he has made it his home. “Hong Kong is a civilised place and everyday life is very organised here. People are enthusiastic and work hard, two characteristics that are not so common in many other parts of the world.”

“Every time we come back to Hong Kong, we have the pleasant feeling of returning home,” said Professor Ciarlet.
We reported early in 2008 that CityU would organise a delegation to take part in this year’s Standard Chartered Hong Kong Marathon held on 8 February. In that article, we also interviewed two delegates who revealed their preparations for the race. We caught up with Dr Muammer Ozer, Associate Professor of the Department of Management, and Mr Kingston Sun Kin-sang, Acting Associate Director of the Facilities Management Office, to follow up on how they fared in the event. We also heard from University President Professor Way Kuo, who led the 639 CityU delegates to complete the different categories of the race.

Professor Kuo completed his first 10km race in about 85 minutes. As an academician, he made use of his intelligence to devise a running strategy. “I started slowly in the beginning and sped up gradually in the latter stages. This ensured I had the strength to complete the whole race,” said Professor Kuo.

The marathon has become a feature event in Hong Kong, with an overwhelming participation rate among local citizens of all ages. Professor Kuo was impressed by a runner aged about 80. His enthusiasm encouraged Professor Kuo to commit to running again next year for CityU and improving his time.

Also a first-time runner in the 10km race, Dr Ozer appreciated the enthusiastic support and good organisation of the University contingent. “Our flags and bright yellow uniforms meant we were a conspicuous presence. During the race, many strangers told me they had either graduated from the University or had friends or relatives at CityU,” Dr Ozer said. “The marathon gave me a sense of unity with the University community. Many colleagues and students arrived early to cheer and help us get ready. I was particularly impressed by the appearance of our cheering teams waving flags at many unexpected locations during the race.” In the wake of this year’s experience, Dr Ozer has decided to run the half marathon next year.

A marathon veteran, Kingston finished the 10km contest in a commendable 70 minutes. As a member of the working team for the CityU delegation, Kingston not only took part in the competition but also contributed to the logistical support. “I was a bit worried in the beginning about any potential emergency that might affect my running but fortunately finished the race without incident,” said Kingston. “It was not too difficult for me to run 10km but holding the University flag throughout the race was a big challenge. It was physically demanding, although the attention the flag attracted meant it was a worthy task.”

Kingston was hospitalised for some time in 2008 and as a result could only take part in the 10km event this year. His target for next year is to hold the University flag and run the half marathon. He is now looking for a flag-bearer to replace him in the 10km race.

The CityU Delegation to take part in the Standard Chartered Hong Kong Marathon 2010 is sure to be a vigorous and energetic team. Let’s look forward to meeting them soon!
Affection for the community

Ellen Chan

“...it is more blessed to give than to receive” is the well-known adage. It is probably also worth remembering that “one man’s junk is another man’s treasure.”

Introduced in 2007, the “Collection of Used Items” programme organised by the Staff Association is aimed at encouraging colleagues to donate usable household items such as electrical appliances, kitchenware, clothing and accessories, bedding, stationery and furniture to underprivileged families. The programme has received an overwhelming response over the past two years. So many items were donated by colleagues that it required four large trucks to remove them all.

Dr Fung Wai-wah, Officer without Portfolio of Staff Association, said the programme was initially designed as a student activity. However, it became evident the University was a good place to collect used items and the programme was expanded to include staff. “This event not only promotes conservation but also encourages colleagues to care about the community,” said Dr Fung.

Dr Fung said it took three months in the past from conceiving the idea to promoting the programme to colleagues, presenting the proposal to the Staff Association and launching the programme. With its years of experience, the Association now needs just one month to organise the collection. The tasks included booking venues and promoting the activity to colleagues. Members of the Association will also personally solicit support from their co-workers. In addition, the Association will invite students to serve as volunteers.

“With the enthusiastic support and cooperation of colleagues, the programme ran smoothly. The assistance provided by the Facilities Management Office helped as well,” said Dr Fung.

Dr Fung puts words into action and often goes with his family to deliver reusable items to second-hand shops, hoping to encourage more people to care about the needs of other people in the community. “It is a blessing that we can enjoy a comfortable life. As responsible citizens, we should pay more attention to the underprivileged in our society. What we are doing may seem insignificant but I believe it can gradually encourage more people to make a contribution to the well-being of society,” Dr Fung said.
Chair Professor Lee Chin-chuan
Acting Head,
Department of Media and Communication

Professor Lee Chin-chuan undertook his undergraduate studies at National Chengchi University in Taiwan. He continued with postgraduate studies in the US and received his PhD degree from the University of Michigan.

He is currently the Acting Head and Chair Professor of the Department of Media and Communication, Director of Centre for Communication Research at CityU and Professor Emeritus of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Minnesota.

His research interests include the political economy of the media, global communication and the interface between social theories and media studies. “I aim to nurture a new generation of cross-media professionals for Hong Kong and the mainland, who have the knowledge and skills to satisfy the future needs of the industry,” Professor Lee said. "The media industry is facing rapid change and the society today is becoming more open and prosperous. By doing so, I can help the students to be equipped with the right knowledge and practical skills to be ready for the next generation."

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Staff Movement

1/3 - 31/3 2008

New Arrivals 到任

General Staff 其他職級

Department of Computer Science
－ Cheng, Hana, Mei-har, 蕭儀儀, Clerical Assistant

Department of Electronic Engineering
－ Chow, Teresa, Lai-yin, 周麗敏, Executive Officer II
－ Ko, Chloie, Wing-yee, 高泳儀, Clerical Officer II

Department of English 英文系
－ Cheng, Chi-wai, 蕭梓慧, Executive Officer II

Department of Information Systems 資訊科學系
－ Wong, Carmen, Kar-yant, 王家欣, Executive Officer II

School of Continuing and Professional Education 專業進修學院
－ Chow, Raymond, 周日民, Programme Officer II
－ Kuk, Ida, Ming-yip, 谷明明, Programme Officer II
－ Chan, Samantha, Chu-yan, 陳超英, Clerical Officer II
－ Chan, Wai-ming, 陳偉明, Technical Support Assistant
－ Cheng, Kam-kin, 鄭錦銘, Clerical Assistant
－ Yuen, Kay-yan, 袁嘉欣, Clerical Assistant
－ Chan, Yee-ting, 陳慧婷, Office Assistant

Centre for Coastal Pollution and Conservation 海洋污染及環保研究中心
－ Wong, Yuk-lin, 黃玉蓮, Labourer

International Centre of Excellence in Prognostics and Health Management 高端診斷與健康管理技術中心
－ Wong, Angie, Wing-yen, 黃詩欣, Clerical Officer I

Language Information Science Research Centre 語言資訊科學研究中心
－ Lin, Yung-feng, 林育峰, Programmer II

Wireless Communications Research Centre 無線通訊研究中心
－ Au, Chi-ho, 鄭志豪, Assistant Engineer

City University of Hong Kong Press 香港城市大學出版社
－ Kwok, Wai-ching, 郭惠賢, Executive Officer II

Computing Services Centre 電算服務中心
－ Hung, Tak-wang, 洪德泓, Information Technology Officer I

Development Office 發展處
－ Tsang, Tommy, Chi-ying, 曾志榮, Assistant IT Officer II

Transfers/Promotions 調升及其它

Chow Yei Ching School of Graduate Studies 周亦卿研究生院
－ Ip, Jane, Tai-ching, 葉嘉欣, Supervisory Executive Officer [ADMO] to Supervisory Executive Officer
A few minutes with...

Ms Vienne Chau Man-kit
Development Officer, Development Office

When did you start work at CityU?
July 2008

If you could spend a week in the shoes of HKSAR Chief Executive Donald Tsang, what would you try to achieve?
Improve the social welfare system of HK

Do you play sports? If so, what?
Swimming

What book is on your bedside table?
Innovations in Annual Giving*

What kind of food do you enjoy most at home?
Steamed egg

What is your favourite dish?
Any kind of soup.

If you could take any CityU course, what would it be?
Arts in Creative Media.

Name the five living people you would invite to your fantasy dinner party (relatives excluded).
Wen Jiabao, Barack Obama, Chris Patten, Donald Tsang and Vladimir Putin.

What one music album/CD would you have with you if stranded on a desert island and it miraculously had electricity and a CD player?
Soundtrack of The Piano.

If you could be a superhero, who would it be?
Hua Mulan.

Name your favourite Hong Kong beach or countryside location.
Hoi Ha Wan.

What was the first paying job you ever had?
Research Assistant.

How do you unwind away from work?
Have a meal with family and friends.

Linkage Quiz

For those colleagues who join the HostFamily@CityU programme, do they have to live with the students?

문로지ROKE@시티유의 프로그램에 참여한 동문들은 학생들과 함께 생활해야 하는�요?

Issa Answer:

姓名(全名) Full Name:

這些同事能否與其他參加者處在不同，且更接近的環境中，並獲得更為客觀的評價？

部門 Department:

The answer should be submitted by 8 April. Each participant is allowed to submit one entry only. HK$50 gift vouchers will be awarded by lottery.

Each participant should submit their answer by 8 April. Each participant is allowed to submit one entry only. HK$50 gift vouchers will be awarded by lottery.

Lucky draw results for Linkage Quiz in issue 276

Chan Fong (FO), Chan Hak-hing (CIO), Chan Ka-yung (MEAO), Chung Siu-lung (SS), Fung Tak-wing (UP), Kam Kin-ping (Scope), Lok Kok-kai (Lib), Mo Mei-kuen (DSS), Wong Kit-yee (AC), Yim Pui-kwan (BCB).

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