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A VISIT TO THE SHANGHAI LIBRARY

by Xiaoming Xu
James White Library, Andrews University

Before my husband and I went to Shanghai, China, I contacted my former classmate, Yang, who worked at the Shanghai Library before retiring. I told her that we would like to visit Shanghai library while we were in Shanghai. Yang enthusiastically responded that she would arrange the tour for us.

I visited Shanghai Library years ago when Yang was still working there. This was my second visit. Shanghai Library is the second largest library in China; only the National Library of China in Beijing is larger. Shanghai Library has 24 stories and is 348 feet (106 meters) tall. It is the tallest library in the world.

On May 25, 2016, at 10 am, we found my classmate, Yang, already there waiting. Not only had she arranged for us to visit the library, she also arranged for me to meet another classmate, Pan, that I had not seen since graduation in 1976. Forty years, what a surprise! We were really excited and happy to be together again.

As soon as Yang led us through the library door, her colleagues were there welcoming us. Her colleague handed a package to Yang, which turned out to be a gift of a book cover from the Shanghai Library.

Yang took us to the spacious lobby area of the library. We

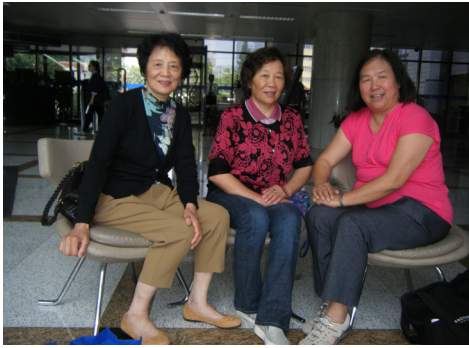
sat and renewed our friendship and relaxed from the hot humid weather outside.

Fully recharged, we were ready for Yang to guide us to see the open reading areas for patrons. We started from the fourth floor down. The foreign literature reading areas, found on the fourth floors, include: The United Nations Depository Library, Friendship Library, foreign newspapers and periodicals reading area, foreign language conference proceedings books, foreign reference books reading room, expo information reading room, and donated books reading area.

Over 3000 titles of books come to the foreign language books reading area monthly. There are 2000 English titles, 600 Russian titles, with the rest being other foreign language titles.

The natural scientific literature reading area and viewing area is found on the third floor. On the second floor we passed by the social science literature reading area and rare book collections,





which contain: Chinese social science periodicals reading room, economy & law reading room, tourism & sports reading room, Chinese ancient books reading room, genealogy reading room, and the protection and restoration gallery. Also found on the second floor are the: rare books and ancient document display area, newspaper clipping services, braille reading room, modern literature reading room, local literature reading room (information reflecting the local political, economic and cultural facts of books of Shanghai districts, counties, towns blogs, and yearbooks) and National Cultural Information Resources Sharing Project and self-service for electronic resources.

We did not explore every corner of the library. As the Chinese saying goes, we were "Looking at flowers while riding on horseback." Yang had arranged for us to see the restoration work done at the library, but people at that department were busy with other tasks at the moment and we did not get in.



There are internet service areas on both the first and second floors. On the first floor, there is a coffee bar area with Internet service, Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) with 52 computers including two for disabled users. Also on the first floor is the self-help book search area, patron services, Chinese multimedia newspaper reading room, and integrated general reading room. This floor was full of people reading and doing research.

Shanghai Library also holds different lectures and exhibitions. Yang told us that side building on the west holds the Multipurpose Hall, exhibition halls for different topics, audio visual rooms, auditoriums, and training centers. The administration offices are found in the east side building.

Finally, Yang took us down to the basement to see where she formerly worked as a foreign language cataloger for books. From inside the lobby, we saw an impressive statue of Confucius, the Chinese philosopher and teacher who promoted a system of social and



political ethics emphasizing order, moderation and reciprocity between superiors and subordinates, and two Chinese characters symbolizing "Seek Knowledge" cultivated and shaped from evergreen bushes. This reminded me of the Andrews University Motto, "Seek Knowledge, Affirm Faith, Change the World." After touring the inside of the library, we went out and took some pictures of the statue of Confucius with the two Chinese characters. It was a refreshing, resourceful, and meaningful visit.

After visiting the Shanghai Library, Yang hospitably treated us to a nice and tasty Shanghai meal in a nearby restaurant. A wonderful library visit, an unforgettable reunion with Pan, and the lasting memory filled my heart with gratefulness to Yang.