

FOREIGN EXCHANGE

Singer Tony Bennett may have left his heart in San Francisco, but **ANDREW PIPER** and **SHARON MORRIS** of the State Library of South Australia left theirs in Jinan, capital of China's Shandong province.

After hosting two librarians from the Shandong Provincial Library (SPL) in 2016, State Library of South Australia (SLSA) further strengthened the relationship and connections with its sister-state province of Shandong by sending two staff – my colleague Sharon Morris (Community Learning Educator) and me, Andrew Piper (Group Manager, Collections) – to China in April and May this year.

In our three weeks abroad we gained an understanding of the Shandong approach to daily life, business and the preservation of cultural heritage.

We learned about the rich culture of the people of Shandong through visits to significant sites – including Daming Lake and the Great Wall – discussions, lectures and library tours.

Library visits helped us to understand the physical items and what the library staff called 'intangible heritage', such as the oral history of the province. The latter is prominent and integral to life in Shandong, whereas in South Australia local stories and history can often be overshadowed by a centralised national media.

The purpose of our visit was to collaborate in preparing an exhibition of materials from SPL's Ancient



Sharon Morris and Andrew Piper with the Director of the Shandong Provincial Library, Mr Feng



Children's Library



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Books department and to review online services, online collections and education programs and practices. We also enjoyed giving lectures.

SLSA and SPL are far apart geographically, but both institutions have similarities, whether it's sharing cultural artefacts and caring for them, or adhering to international standards and accessibility principles for websites. Both unpack stories and educate their citizens.

SLSA has had more opportunity lately to make its collections open and share them with overseas institutions, but SPL was particularly interested in the notion of openness and sharing collections for them to be commented upon by visitors. The SPL staff were impressed with the engagement opportunities SLSA provides to collections and its lead role in local and national open data competitions.

The cultural exchange will result in an exhibition at SLSA in 2018, the first opportunity for any Shandong cultural institution to loan materials anywhere.

The exhibition will consist of stone rubbings, classic books, and selected items from a famous private collection from the Song (960–1279) and Ming (1368–1644) dynasties (these collections were the beginning of the library).

The two institutions also learned from each other about services for children. SPL places value on the importance of children as active citizens within their city and it has a children's library that provides strong collections and programs.

SLSA is also beginning to attract children to the library through the employment of professional educators who develop quality learning programs informed by current educational learning theory and research. Both

libraries share an interest in developing ways to engage children as more powerful partners in the learning process, connect them with collections, and foster their development as confident, creative and enquiring thinkers.

The relationships created will no doubt benefit the ongoing exchange of information, data and ideas between the two institutions.

The visit had a remarkable effect on us. We are both keen to maintain the relationship with the SPL and its staff and to continue to be a part of the South Australian government's ongoing trade mission with Shandong Province. 🇺🇸

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Sharon Morris and Andrew Piper of SLSA riding bikes in Shandong