

Joshua Ng

Supervisors: Newton Lee (NUS Hollywood Lab) and Jeff Burke (UCLA REMAP)



Joshua Ng in front of the Kodak Theatre, home of the Oscar Awards

1st July 2009

NUS HOLLYWOOD LAB INTERNSHIP HOLLYWOOD PLACE PROJECT REPORT (JUNE 10 - JULY 1)

As this is the first time I'm in the United States. It took me quite some time to get accustomed to the system of living over here. The first thing that caught my attention is the fact that cars drive on the right side of the road and the steering wheel is on the left side of the car. My first few encounter on the car was weird every time the car makes a turn, it is as if "something's amiss". Crossing the road is no easy task for me as well as I am so used to looking to the left first before looking to the right for oncoming cars.

My housemates are all mexicans, and my first breakfast in US was tortillas with egg, a whole new experience for me. I can't say I love mexican food but they do have a unique taste. Taco Bell, a mexican fast food chain, has been my source of food for many days. Their Chicken Burritos are 89¢, the cheapest I've seen so far.

The first thing that I set out to do was to get a working mobile phone SIM card. Angel Mendoza, my kind housemate brought me to Radio Shack and I got myself an AT&T PayAsYouGo Phone, the cheapest in the store. Apparently getting a phone+a SIM card is way cheaper than getting a SIM card alone.

Initially I was considering opening an US Bank Account to facilitate transactions over here but the DBS AlumNUS Debit Card I got from NUS works well over here. Thus, I didn't went ahead with the opening of a bank account. The same goes for Social Security ID, there was no apparent need for it, thus I didn't went ahead to apply for one.

I have done quite a bit of sightseeing ever since I set foot in Los Angeles. The places that I have been to include Page Museum, Getty Center, Santa Monica Pier, California Science Center, University of Southern California, The Original Farmer's Market, The Grove., Hollywood Blvd, Kodak Theatre. This upcoming weekend, July 4th Weekend, I plan to visit Las Vegas on a guided tour. The tour will include Grand Canyon and Hoover Dam. I am hoping that through these sightseeing, I will be able to appreciate more of Los Angeles, which in turn translate into the understanding of the importance of having a project that addresses the cultural and historical importance of this whole area, particularly Hollywood.

On June 23, together with Jing Yao, Newton and Inessa, we met up with Jeff for a introduction briefing of the project. Jeff brought us around UCLA for a quick tour, introducing the CENS and Hypermedia Studio. This meeting was a successful one as we understand more about the project and Jeff understands more about us and our area of interest. Jeff extended an invitation to Jing Yao for a tour to the State Park in Downtown LA, I thought it will be great to tag along and learn more about the exciting project assigned to Jing Yao.

On June 26, Jing Yao and I took a bus from UCLA-Ackerman Terminal in the late morning, hoping to reach China Town Metro Station at 1pm. Our naivety has caused us to miscalculate the duration of the journey and we were late for an hour. That was a hard-learned lesson about Los Angeles' traffic and I kept that in mind from then onward. Jeff brought us to Philippe Sandwich for lunch which is a historical building by itself, aged at 100 years old. After lunch, we walked all along Broadway street and the hills surrounding the state park. Jeff gave us a brief history of the state park and its development. Our next stop was Chiparaki Cultural Civic Computing, Cliff, the guy that runs that center, was not in. We walked around in the building for a bit and thus ended our adventure for the day. This trip has brought me new knowledge about Los Angeles and its beginnings, its once glorious days as a important stop for the trains to switch track and unload, the reason why the early settlers chose downtown as their settlement. It gave enormous meaning to the historical state park project, it is unduly important for the current generation of LA residents to understand their roots and the beginnings of the city where they live in.

This 3 weeks has been constantly an eye-opener for me. The cultural baptism I have received ever since the day I have arrived at Los Angeles continues to fuel me in my quest to capture memories and inspire people. I am looking forward to meet the rest of the contributors to this project in the upcoming week which includes Cliff and Nicolai. I am hoping that more concrete assignment will be given to me at the end of this week so that I can truly gear up and go one notch higher in my internship here.

Joshua Ng
15th July 2009

NUS HOLLYWOOD LAB INTERNSHIP HOLLYWOOD PLACE PROJECT REPORT (JUNE 2 - JULY 15)

The end of the first fortnight marks the end of my “orientation” . It also marked the beginning of the anticipated excitement of my work in Hypermedia Studio. On top of that I think I have finally “settled-in”. My experiences with the public utilities in L.A. so far gave me a perfect contrast with Singapore’s public utilities. I would have to agree that the phrase “Everything in Singapore is much more efficient” is nothing less than the truth.

To kick-start my involvement in the project, I was asked to meet with a few key persons in this project, namely **Nicolai** who develops the location-specific Flash application platform; **Fabian** who is actively involved in the REMAP L.A. project; and **Cliff**, a PhD student under Bob Rosen the Dean of UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television whom current research interest lies on a similar direction as the Hollywood Place project.

10 minutes into the meeting with Nicolai made me realise how little I know about ActionScript 3.0, Flash CS4 and the software development that he’s doing. But my wish is always to learn and contribute in the software development side of the project. Thus, Nicolai suggests that I read up more on ActionScript 3.0. Meanwhile, I should try to manually configure the Nokia N810 tablet so as to prepare it to run the Flash app that he has developed. Even with detailed instructions, it proves to be a tedious and time-consuming task, nonetheless I got it configured within 2 days.

The meeting with Cliff was a memorable experience where we are fascinated by each other’s perspective into things. I could sense a most pleasant collaboration between a science-mind and a liberal-arts-mind in the weeks to come. Just like me, Cliff is fresh on the project and knew only as much as I do. Cliff suggests that our first task is to meet-up with Fabian and extract all the media information that his REMAP L.A. team has gathered thus far.

10a.m., 15th of July, Cliff and I met up with Fabian in his Chiporaki Cultural Civic Computing center at Chinatown. Fabian showed up the work he and his team has done thus far. With a slightly better understanding of what the REMAP LA project is about now, I am deeply inspired and moved by what it has set out to do and the tremendous progress. It is a extremely meaningful collection/archival project that I hope communities will come to realize its importance. Once again it enforces my view regarding the importance of archives, which are actually stories that recount the past, frame our present, and possess our futures. My own experience in archival work is that people actually despises it as tedious and boring work. I have always wondered what are the incentives or motivations for people to be a part of the archival effort? Summing up all that I’ve learned from the REMAP L.A. project and Fabian’s sharing, the key point here is ‘output’. There must be some form of physical/tangible output, application of the archives that combines both the input of the archives and the input of the archivist. That,

provides the momentum necessary for an archival project to run continuously. After all, archives will just be useless collections if people has no access or difficult access to it.

Besides the meetings and the software development, I was asked to produce a short commercial/promotion video for the Hollywood Place project. After some discussions with Newton regarding the targeted audience and scope of the project, I wrote a draft script. As this is the first time I write a formal script, I am really grateful that it turned out alright and Newton likes the script a lot. Currently, the script is undergoing revisions by Newton and Cliff and the filming will start any time soon.

“All work and no play makes joshuatj a dull boy”. On a side note, as July 4th is the Independence Day of the US and a long weekend, I took the opportunity to visit Las Vegas. It was an eye-opener, enough said.