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ECNU CIRCLE
华东师范大学英文校园刊物

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语 者歌章

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DIRECTORY

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PROFILE【人物】

- Overcome Pressure and Be Content with Yourself

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SPOTLIGHT【校园热点】

- ECNU Team Wins Computing Competition with Artificial Intelligence for Calligraphy Teaching

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LITERATURE〔美

STUDY ABROAD【他山之石】

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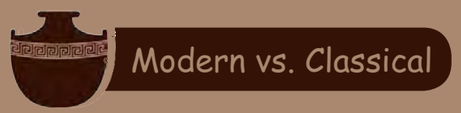
In this fast-paced world, fewer and fewer

them is developing a sense of craftsmanship[6] and the complexity of its techniques. Pottery and sculpture are dissimilar. Sculpture has a strong plasticity whereas the nature of pottery materials will limit the freedom of operators. Pottery also requires producers to have a good grasp of those materials. For non-art majors, learning pottery is more of a training on metaphysical[7] awareness. We often say, “Ideology outweighs practice.” It is more essential to have a basic concept in mind before you practice it.

E: Are there any works of students that impress you in the course of “the Art and Demonstration of Watercolor”?

G: This course has just been offered to students majoring in art education for the past two years. Most of the time, after graduation, these students will become teachers in primary and secondary schools, and the permeability and flexibility of watercolor make it easier for primary and secondary school students to operate. Hence, the orientation of the course is primarily to develop students’ creative thinking and the use of watercolor through the combination of oil pastels[8], markers and other mediums. Since no matter what major students are studying, Chinese students have experienced exam-oriented education for a long time, I hope that students can get rid of such rigid education mode in this course. In effect, the process of teaching is learning as well, and that is why I adore my students’ works. For instance, there was a project called “Inspiration from Music”. This topic required students to choose one of their favorite songs and then draw a picture while listening to it in order to express their understanding of that song through lines and blocks. The whole picture reflects the authentic sense of painting. Despite the fact that their skills are immatureto some extent, their works still have a lot of highlights, providing materials and sources for their future artistic creation.



E: In your dissertation, you have conducted an in-depth discussion on the modern ceramic art. What is your opinion on the relationship between the modern ceramic art and the traditional form of it?

G: I think they are not conflicting, but co-prosperous. China has thousands of years of ceramic culture, therefore whether it is modern pottery or traditional pottery, the traditional basis is valuable, otherwise the works would be rootless. Although China has a greater say in ceramics in history, pottery in China has gone through a period of downfall from the Qing Dynasty to the Republic of China. Albeit modern art goes against tradition, I believe traditional ceramics and modern ceramics can go hand in hand with each other.

E: Modern Chinese pottery can be found in the trends from Western art. How will these trends move forward in the future?

G: Modern pottery belongs to the history of Western civilization, so if we involve the history of Eastern civilization into it, they will seem incompatible due to distinctive cultures. In fact, the ceramics industry has been considering this issue that if we always tend to copy, imitate or take example by Western works, there would be no artistic language of our own. Nevertheless, in recent decades, many artists have tried to create very outstanding works, and I am personally in favor of the idea that oriental culture should take root in the modern pottery. We can all learn more about Chinese ceramics if we promote the traditional culture.

E: What’s the most proper way to balance practicality with artistry in making pottery?

G: In real life, everyone seems to draw a clear distinction between the practicality and artistry of pottery, such as household utensils. But this is actually a very deplorable phenomenon. Just like when you eat out in the restaurant, you will find that the teapots are exactly the same across the country. The same teapots have no artistic functions except for pouring water. The reason for this phenomenon is not far to seek. Household utensils, such as commodities, apparently involve interests of multiple parties. If we intend to enhance the artistry of the goods, the intermediate production process will be cumbersome, and

the cost will increase accordingly. That is how profit becomes one element of concern. In addition, if we want to perfectly combine practicality with artistry, it is necessary to improve the overall visual literacy of the general public. A case in point is to place an artistic as well as practical tableware at home, then your mood would obviously be different while dinning. Another example is that the early British ceramist Lucie Rie raised the value of the utensils to an artistic level, which had a great impact on future generations.

you would make to promote the ceramics and make it more common in our life?

G: We can understand the ceramics of our everyday lives as home decorations. For example, we can place some artwork in our living room or bedrooms. In foreign countries, the general public pay a respect to artworks and even if students are not art majors, they will have good aesthetics literacy, even if they are not art majors. We need to constantly improve our taste in art. We can pay a visit to some ceramic exhibitions to improve our artistic literacy.

E: What do you think is the difference between ceramic art and other art forms (such as engraving, painting, calligraphy and etc.)? How does its uniqueness manifest itself?

G: People need to understand how ceramics change from one substance to another through burning. For example, a mass of soft mud—after being fired—becomes a hard ceramic in its final form. Other di f erences are the forms of water and the uncertainty and variability of fire. For other materials, such as the oil painting, what color to use or what effect people want to achieve can be intuitively controlled during the process, while ceramics will encounter many emergencies during the firing process. Although the venation[9] and the basic rules of art are similar, the materials in every f eld are utterly di f erent. The command and the use of materials will lead to variations as well.

E: You created "Stylite[10]" in 2015. Could you please introduce those techniques

G: It all started after I became a mother in 2015. I wanted to create works about humans to express my f eelings. My personal interests in Zen and Buddhism also helped create "Stylite". Although it experienced many twists and turns[11], "Stylite" was made by turning over the formwork[12] for countless times. The template remained the same, but after flipping it, each work had some subtle changes. And the same applied to a "Stylite" whose life is di f erent at every stage.

E: What is process of producing this work?

G: It was made by moulding and turning over the formwork. Because the center of gravity was di f cult to handle, in the process of overturning the mold, sometimes it would teeter[13], or sometimes the legs would break, as they were very thin, resulting in the high failure rate of approximately 50%. I kept on trying though, and every effort to turn it over gradually worked. I owe the success of this work to major changes in my own life—a brand-new understanding on everything. I never had access to the field of humans before, but after I became a mother, I wanted to do something di f erent.

E: Where does your inspiration usually come from?

G: Truth be told, I am a comparatively life-oriented person. The plants, flowers and small fruits in nature are the sources of my inspiration. And the small objects in life often bring me creative ideas.

E: The word "crossover" is now absolutely popular. Have you ever considered the cooperation between ceramics and other

G: A group of works I have done recently is combined with Acryl. Contemporary art must be a combination of vario T m g B ,

competition highlighting personal talents. Ten girls were selected from competitors recommended by different colleges to enter the final, which was composed of the group opening dance, the individual talent show, the game session and the intelligence test. The final result from on-site voting was determined by five judges in which the most critical part for me was the talent show. My inspiration was derived from a TV series called The Biography of Zhen Huan. Beginning with a recitation, my performance integrated slow-paced Water Sleeve Dance into dynamic Dai Dance. Thanks to my passion for dancing, not to mention my seven years' dancing experience, I had my opportunity to stand out among the other contestants.

E: You have taken part in activities such as Let Daxia Hear Your Voice and Psychological Dramas for College Students think are your primary advantages in being able to balance everything?

L: My major attaches great importance to students' artistic capabilities. Therefore, it's no wonder that I gained an edge over others with my stage performance and voice professionalism. Moreover, my physical training, body control and dancing experience added to my chances in winning those competitions and activities.

Now for the preparation, if there are too many things to do, you should solve them in order of importance and urgency—focus on what's most important and then squeeze time for the other things later. For example, in my freshman year, I participated in a popular play of the Yangzhishui Drama Club. We had 45 days to rehearse it, and we had to rehearse until after midnight.

I remember it was so cold during winter. My hands and feet went numb when we rehearsed on the outdoor rooftop: but everyone kept on working hard, repeating the same lines and movements over and over again, until we finally had it done perfectly. I also had lots of homework, and I had to prepare for many competitions, interviews and hosts while sacrificing my sleep and meal time to complete one task after another.

Fortunately, I had more energy than the average person, and so eating less and sleeping less would not affect my life too much. But I remember that by the time the formal performance had approached, I was completely exhausted—and just sick and tired of trying to juggle everything. Said that, I think doing school and extracurricular activities are both a process of self-improvement; the classroom learning gives me theoretical knowledge, while extracurricular activities provide me with practical opportunities.

E: You also traveled to the United States before, could you share that experience with us?

L: I chose to go to the United States because I wanted to live with a host family and experience the local culture and life. The host family was very kind to us. Every night they would talk with me about politics, economy, gun laws, education and the environment. I also talked to them about China, such as Alipay, wide usage of QR code, high-speed railway and much more.

Those twenty days I spent abroad completely changed my mindset. For a long time after I returned to China, I have been thinking about the fact that the young generations live under such a fast-paced life. We need to constantly update ourselves and learn to adapt to the rapid changes in the media industry, and at the same time, we have to face huge pressure in a highly competitive environment. Take our broadcasting major as an example, although the physical appearance is important, it is obviously not enough to support us in the rapidly-changing industry. Only by exploring our own potential and finding our own characteristics can we understand what is suitable for us.

E: What do broadcasting majors do after graduation?

L: Right now the hosting industry is relatively saturated[5] so we have little chance to enter the mainstream media, and local media may not be a desirable choice. It is difficult to do hosting as a career. At present, actors, singers and we-media are the future some students will choose. Many other students will choose to work in companies to do public relations, or teach in educational institutions.

There is great uncertainty for those who choose this career. Now there are two choices in front of me: one is recommended for the postgraduate study, the other is to study in the United States. If I choose the former one, I would like to major in journalism and communication. If I choose the latter one, I want to study media marketing or media planning as a major. During the two years in college, I devoted most of my energy to study and I recently entered some new clubs and tried we-media while hoping to make a decision about my future plan soon.

E: Do you have any suggestions on how to plan study and life for upcoming university students?

L: Learning in college is more like a game of concentration. You have to beat inertia[6] and find the way of getting along with yourself. Learning methods may vary from person to person, but one thing is for sure: there are no shortcuts. That's why we must focus on our work, think critically about our choices, and be down-to-earth at all times.

I also want to encourage others to find their own path in life. Take myself for an example, although I got good grades in college, my grades in high school were not very good because I majored in natural sciences in high school when my actual strengths were in liberal arts. Then my life in high school was coming under some intense pressure, like I did poorly in the college entrance examination. This was a bitter lesson. But later when I was admitted to ECNU, I was able to take up my passion in broadcasting. I'm very happy and content with what I'm learning

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The Voice of ECNU is an English radio program for teachers and students, which aimed at creating an English-learning atmosphere, providing English learners with an opportunity to demonstrate their language skills, and putting their voices on the air for the entertainment of other ECNUers on campus. VOE has broadcasted nearly one hundred of its programs since officially starting in September 2013 with lively and creative forms of content for its listeners, to which ECNUers have responded with delightful remarks. *ECNU Circle* journalists interviewed two of the professors who are in charge of[1] VOE, Ms. Guo Wenting and Ms. Xu Ling—both of them are teachers in the College English Teaching Department at ECNU. Let's see how it all got started.

ECNU Circle: We already know a little bit about VOE from what we've heard on campus[2]. Can you give us a brief introduction of the program in your own words?

Guo Wenting: VOE—the Voice of ECNU—is an English radio program, the target audience of which are teachers and students of ECNU. Most of the VOE members are non-English majors who are responsible for everything about the program, including drafting, broadcasting, editing, etc. We now have over twenty members. VOE comes on the air at the ECNU Minhang campus every Wednesday, starting at 12:00 and lasting 30 to 40 minutes. We normally cover three to four columns for each program.

E: How do you make preparations for the program?

G: We need to make lots of preparations in advance. At the beginning of each new semester, we usually make an overall schedule, then we make preparations for each broadcast fifteen days ahead of time. The members responsible for the program must choose the topics and write articles about it, and then submit the materials for us to review and revise for final completion. Afterwards, they will practice reading aloud until they feel confident to speak on air. They make earlier recordings on the cellphone and send the soundtracks[3] to us so that we can review them online, at which point we outline our detailed feedback, such as their pronunciation and intonation, in order for them to practice and make necessary improvements. Finally, all members of VOE will gather at the English studio and make the integrated radio program—that includes the opening music at the beginning of every program.

ECNU Circle: Now, please tell us how VOE got started. Is there an interesting backstory?

Xu Ling: Yes, certainly there is. It was the former headmaster of ECNU Chen Qun, who originally came up with the idea of an English radio program in 2012, as a way to improve the status of ECNU on a national basis. He also thought that it could give the university more international clout. VOE also came at a time when the English Teaching Department was undergoing a major reform in several features, like changes in curriculum and various extracurricular programs including *ECNU Circle*, English-Chinese Corner, and VOE. And that's how it all got started. These programs have all prospered in the last seven years thanks to the dedicated efforts from both teachers and students.

E: Being a relatively new program at ECNU, we would like to know more about the obstacles

X: There were two major difficulties for VOE. One is that we don't have a professional recording studio. We can only record in our office, with a microphone and a computer in the room, which means we have no way to shield the noises from outside of the room. Additionally, the distance between Minhang and Zhongbei means considerable traveling time for students and teachers in Zhongbei. Another thing is the constant change of staff members, as there are always members who will leave as they get into higher grades or graduate from ECNU. As a result, we need to recruit[4] and train new members each semester to ensure that VOE continues to run smoothly.

E: What kind of ideas do you have now about VOE?

G: Initially, we just wanted an English radio program to let students speak out about ECNU and their lives as ECNUers. Then as time goes on, we gradually realize that VOE effectively provides a stage for students—especially non-English majors—to demonstrate their abilities in using the English language. We also know that many of those students have done excellent work at VOE, and it has greatly boosted their interest and confidence to use the English language. Through the experience they also learn about cooperation and the importance of teamwork, which in itself is a precious memory that they will treasure for their life after graduation.

E: Can you introduce some of the special topics in VOE?

X: We go through ten topics in VOE: *In The News, English On Screen, Learn From Classics, Rhyme On Air, Wednesday Focus, Cultural Express, Nature and Science, Study Abroad, Imitation Show,* and *Learn from TED. In The News* is about what is currently happening on the campus. *English On Screen* is a program on movies, including the introduction and analysis of characters, plots, and meanings. Proverbs and slang are discussed in

Learn From Classics, and you can hear beautiful proses and poems in *Rhyme On Air*. Imitation Show offers students chances to imitate famous speeches of celebrities or popular movies. Some students even played parts of three roles in one movie. Finally, *Wednesday Focus* are interviews with teachers and students in English. For one program, We invited Mr. Tong Shijun, University Council Chairman of ECNU, who joined in our broadcasting. We had a wonderful chat in English.

E: How did these ten columns become the

G: Originally, we only had four columns, which were decided by the four original founding members after a series of heated discussions. Then some new members brought in more ideas, and we also learned about new programs from the mainstream[5] media. For instance, some of the students from natural-science majors proposed *Nature and Science*. Other students who were interested in BBC News produced *In The News*. Then some movie lovers suggested the dubbing of classic movie episodes, hence the creation of *Imitation Show*.

E: As for the ...s, what ... achers and students of ECNU ... from VOE? ...adcast?

X: I think th... teners can le... a lot from our programs bec... the content is ...ted to our campus life. For ...mple, throug... *Wednesday Focus*, you can h... the latest re... of major

ECNU Team Wins

Computing Competition with artificial Intelligence for Calligraphy[1] Teaching

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Three undergraduates from East China Normal University won the first prize of *12th Chinese Collegiate Computing Competition* in 2019. They named their work the "Smart Tutoring System for Calligraphy", which applies Artificial Intelligence (AI) to the curricula of calligraphy teaching and practice. *ECNU Circle* journalists got an inside look at how the project began and in what ways it developed into an award-winning application.

Smart Tutoring System for Calligraphy
Interviewee: Liu Hang, Team Leader, Electronic Engineering

ECNU Circle: How did the team decide on the "Smar
for Calligraph
Liu
goal

my childhood. Then I got an idea that we could put AI and calligraphy together.

After consulting my teammates and teachers, they agreed that even though there were AI products related to calligraphy, most of them used electronic screens and pens. That's how we decided to develop a product that preserves the traditional features of calligraphy, one that enables the users to write with real brush, pen and paper.

E: Can you tell us what we need to know about the overall structure and functions of the system?

L: This system consists of two parts: the calligraphy teaching software and the intelligent calligraphy platform. The intelligent calligraphy platform is a table that can automatically move up and down according to the writer's height and position. For instance, some people like to write while standing up, others may like to sit down, so we want the table to position itself for the convenience of all users. Our writing desk can judge how tall the learner is, and whether he/she is standing or sitting, before adjusting itself to the appropriate height by automatically moving into position.

After identifying the position, the calligraphy teaching software will then assess whether the user is holding the brush properly and make corrections if necessary. More importantly, this software
ate and analyze the writing
marking the right parts in
blems in red, with an overall

E: Can you give us some additional information about the software applications of the project?

L: This software includes thousands of calligraphy samples, from ancient calligraphers, like Yan Zhenqing, to modern forms of calligraphy mainly collected from the Internet. We also developed several samples by ourselves as a way to upgrade the existing catalogue.

There are two steps to evaluate the user's handwriting. The first step is feature extraction, with all discernible details such as shape, thickness, ink use, etc. The second step involves a mathematical model which collects data that compares the user's handwriting features with the original models. The overall layout, consistency and space between characters are also included in the evaluation criteria.

E: As there are many different styles in calligraphy, how does the system evaluate the style in addition to performance or writing techniques?

L: Our algorithm has been developed more for the purpose of handwriting itself and less on the style. That means whether you write in the Yan (Zhengqing) style or the Liu (Gong Quan) style, as long as the scripts are square and upright, they can all be evaluated by our machine. Because of the massive diversity of fonts that were collected into the dataset, our system is adept at recognizing the users' written characters. It can find the closest match between the user's words and the corresponding model, and then evaluate the handwriting accordingly.

E: Calligraphy is an art form. If people's subjective views on calligraphy aren't met by these software applications and evaluation criteria, then how can you be sure that this project is applicable to all?

L: There are certain standards for calligraphy, especially for beginners. Like when I first started learning calligraphy, I had to imitate a certain font style for a long time: the closer I got to the original font, the more effectively I had been trained. The target users of our teaching system are beginners, so the evaluation criteria is based on complying to the norms of stroke order—an important first step for learning calligraphy, and our system is well developed in this aspect. Meanwhile, the timely feedback being provided by the machine helps users avoid their most basic problems and thus improve at a faster pace. The users are supposed to reach the point when they don't need to use this system any more, and we believe that lies in getting over the stage of imitation. I want to be clear that we agree calligraphy is an aesthetic[3] art so there shouldn't be any fixed boundary for so-called good or bad calligraphy. Our system does not promote replacing humans with AI, especially in the event of calligraphy evaluation, practice and teaching.

E: What do you think of the pros and cons of this AI system compared to the traditional calligraphy teaching?

L: The traditional teaching consists of teachers evaluating students' work and then giving them advice for improvement. This interpersonal form of providing feedback contains some flaws: there's time constraints, because usually the teachers can only point out one or two of the major problems in one setting; then the quality of teaching, proficiency and experience cannot be guaranteed for each class. Now that calligraphy is becoming a required course in elementary and high schools, there is a lack of qualified calligraphy teachers in many schools. These are all barriers in the interpersonal scenario of calligraphy teaching. Our system intends to supplement the traditional aspects of learning by allowing the users to practice calligraphy with flexible schedules, instant feedback and comprehensive development.

Teamwork
Interviewee: Wang Xi, Undergraduate of 2016, Electronic Engineering

E: How did this team initially come together and what about your division of labor?

Wangxi: It started when a senior student who participated in *The 11th Chinese Collegiate Computing Competition* in 2018 recommended Liu Hang to participate in this year's competition. Liu Hang took his advice and set about building a team. After I learned about this, I felt interested in the competition and joined the team. I also invited my classmate Gu Junjie.

The division of labor changed many times. At first, because Liu Hang had done some robot-related work before, he took the initiative to undertake the design of the hardware. Gu Junjie and I were responsible for the software design. We often adjusted roles to play to our different strengths. Liu Hang was to build the calligraphy identification system as he was more efficient with order and logic. Gu Junjie was the most patient of us all, and that's why he was chosen for the interface design, which demanded meticulous details and a short time-frame. My job was finally shifted to the construction of the calligraphy table and the debugging of the hardware system. During the process, we shifted our roles several times to make the best use of everyone's advantages—that is how we became a powerful team.

E:How did the team solve the inevitable

W: As students, we were all very busy with our academic work. Meanwhile, we were also members of several other competitions, so we had to strike a proper balance with proper timing and planning for all of the tasks.

We considered the immediate task-at-hand to be the hardware; it was the core of our project, and we designed a whole set of equipment, including the calligraphy table, the brush pen machine and other automatic parts. Afterwards we realized that the next big task was to start over on the calligraphy analysis. Fortunately we were able to adjust the design, reallocate[4] the tasks, and by then we were already back on the right track.

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proves the teacher's training methods. Besides that, it is very useful to those interested in independent learning. For those who do not have the time or opportunity to sign up for a calligraphy course, they can study by themselves with the help of this system.

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Future
Interviewee: Gu Junjie, Undergraduate of 2016, Electronic Engineering

E: What are the main roles that you think Artificial Intelligence currently plays in our society? How about in the future?

Gu Junjie: Artificial Intelligence embodies most of the technological innovations in our society today. Its main function is to assist human beings, instead of substituting our roles. Take the Industrial Age as an example, when machines dramatically changed the way of production, many people were concerned that human beings would be left with nothing to do. Looking back now, we can see the emergence of machines actually created more jobs, and enhanced the values of work-ethic. AI is the same in this sense. It will do a lot of work that was originally done by humans, but in the end it will serve people and improve our work-efficiency.

There are also new security concerns about AI that cannot be ignored, for example, the issues of data privacy. Usually mass data is required for the proper functioning of AI, which brings data and cybersecurity[5] to the forefront of any discussion on its role in the future. We are now in the age of AI, and I hope there will be more AI products to

1. calligraphy: n.
2. augmented reality:
3. aesthetic: adj.
4. reallocate: v.
5. cybersecurity: n.

Cultivating Culture and Nourishing Civilization: The ECNU Library's Orientation Programs

The ECNU library has long been a unique cultural symbol associated with the academic life of every ECNUer, playing a part in two critical aspects of academics: knowledge diffusion and resource sharing. To provide newcomers with practical guidance and enrich their learning experiences, the ECNU library has hosted a series of orientation programs this year. *ECNU Circle* was lucky to hold an exclusive interview with the library curator Professor Hu Xiaoming to learn more about these initiatives and how the library plays a role in shaping ECNU campus culture.

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A Glimpse at Orientation Activities Held by ECNU Library

ECNU Circle: It has been a long-held tradition for our library to host a variety of orientation activities for the newcomers every year. What are the highlights this year?

Professor Hu Xiaoming: The "Freshman Theme Book Fair" provides newcomers with both ancient and modern literary classics containing Chinese and foreign languages. The exhibition hall displays a variety of bibliographies in literature, history, politics, economics and other felds. These books cover a wide range of subjects, including the review of the academic history of modern China, the analysis of modern Chinese thoughts, the appreciation of Tang and Song poetry, and many of western literature.

Another interesting activity is the "Freshman Treasure Hunt", which enables the new ECNUers to get familiar with the layout of the library and trains them on how to access electronic resources—one activity incorporates interactive games as a way to help them learn about the library. Students who participate in the activity will also be rewarded with some nice gifts for completing the trial.

The "Professors' Bookshelf" invites well-known ECNU alumni and professors to recommend books for students. Each book sb א i l fbok the u- nb ı sm ʊ a ` coi ani ʌ l M r ` comr ɪ
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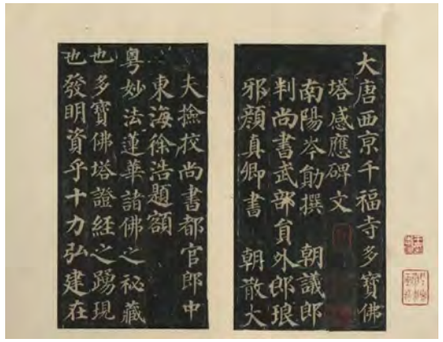
exhibition of Shanghai's handwoven cloth—is the inheritance and innovation of skills in making Shanghai's traditional handmade cotton cloth. Focusing on the history and folk customs being upheld in Shanghai's traditional handwoven cloth in different periods, the exhibition presented the culture of handwoven cloth and promoted the awareness of promoting traditional handicraft among younger generations.

Besides, the *Stele of Abundant Treasure Pagoda*[4], put together by Yan Zhenqing, could be considered the most precious part of the library experience, and it will be exhibited on October 17th along with the release of the high-def (HD) version. The exhibition of *Stele of Abundant Treasure Pagoda* strives to bring the cultural relics to life letting more people feel the beauty and charm of Chinese calligraphy and culture. The dissemination of traditional Chinese culture is a gift we present for the 70th birthday of our motherland.



How to Make Better Use of the Library and its Resources?

E: How well do ECNU students make use of the current library resources?

H: The average number of students entering the library on the two campuses is about 6,000 per day and the total number of books borrowed and renewed in 2018 was about 560,000. When it comes to the most preferred study environment, ECNU students tend to prefer libraries rather than classrooms or laboratories. I think the reason is that the library has an elegant design and relaxing atmosphere, where students find it easier to eliminate distractions and focus on their learning.

E: What is your suggestion for the newcomers in terms of exploring the library resources?

H: A well-equipped library is what characterizes any prestigious university. Libraries play an indispensable part in knowledge dissemination, and my first suggestion for the newcomers is that they should make full use of the spacious learning space in the ECNU library. Our library has been called the university without walls in that it creates an ideal learning atmosphere for students so that they can concentrate on their academic work.

Meanwhile, I recommend that ECNU students take full advantage of the digital resources in our library. To keep pace with the information age, every year our library invests a lot in introducing and managing a variety of database engines, such as foreign periodical databases, classical music databases, and so on. It is worth mentioning that the classical music database introduced by ECNU library is one of the largest databases for classical music in the world. In the library, headphones and other affiliated devices of the database are accessible to students, too. Even when they are off-campus, they can have easy access to the database through VPN. This complements a "waterfall style" book borrowing machine that has recently been put into use on Minhang campus. By scanning the QR code on the screen, students can read their favorite books and attend a lecture online, making it possible for them to read and study anytime and anywhere.

I sincerely hope that our students can retain their passion for paperback books in a time when E-books are becoming more prevalent. Shanghai Book Fair, known as a holiday for book lovers, is apparently attributed to the irresistible charm that those paperback books possess. The ECNU library holds a series of thematic activities such as reading workshops, cultural heritage symposiums and book fairs, which aim at encouraging ECNU students to improve their academic literacy.

The Role of Promoting Culture through the Library

E: What role do you think the library plays in promoting the aspects of Chinese culture?

H: As an eternal mission of any library, cultural inheritance should always be given the top priority. China has played an increasingly important role as a pioneer and promotor in global development. Under the circumstance that China is striding towards the center of the world stage, it's essential that we equip China's young generation with an understanding and insight into the Chinese culture. For this duty, the ECNU library proudly hosts a series of activities including reading workshops and cultural exhibitions. We hope students will come to realize that the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is based on the revitalization of traditional Chinese culture.

E: What do you think of the future development of our library?

H: The future of the library is unpredictable. With the rapid development of information technologies, some existing functions of the library may be partially replaced by artificial intelligence or other innovative technologies in the future. On the other hand, in promoting creativity and learning, it will continue to inspire the great human minds that are coming out of ECNU. The mission of the ECNU library is to serve as a bridge—a bridge with cultural inheritance as its foundation—connecting those human civilizations of the past with those of the future.

1. *Outline of Chinese History*: 《
2. *The Crowd*: 《
3. *Alone Together*: 《
4. *Stele of Abundant Treasure Pagoda*: 《多宝塔碑》

History as a Mirror for the Reflection of Humanity: An Interview with ECNU History Youth Club

Founded in 1980, the History Youth Club is one of the oldest clubs in East China Normal University. It has won the honor of Five-star Club for 15 consecutive years and was awarded the Shanghai Star Club twice. *ECNU Circle* will take you on a tour with the Club Chair, Zhao Ruishuang, who tells us everything we need to know about this influential club, as well as unveiling one of their inspiring historical dramas.

ECNU Circle: Could you give us a brief introduction about the History Youth Club at ECNU?

Zhao Ruishuang: The ECNU Youth History Club was founded in 1980 by the Department of History. In December 2017, the club was awarded the title of the 2017 Excellent University Student Community in Theory Learning by the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee[1] and the Municipal Academic Union[2]. The Youth History Club inspires those who are lovers of history to exchange their thoughts and in this way has been promoting the inheritance and development of the historical science in ECNU. So far, the club has been regarded as a supplement to the history course-curriculum and provides professors and students a way to interact with each other.

E: What are the Club's regular activities?

Z: Our club has a lot of activities. We have Shi Ji Salon, in which we invite the renowned[3] professors to talk with students on chosen academic topics. We also have Si Wen Reading Club, an initiative starting from 2017, where we can share our thoughts on books. Compared to Shi Ji Salon, the reading club is on a smaller scale, and brings the participants closer into the discussions. We also set up a mini theatre called "1980 Projection Room" where we show some historical films. Through this activity we are able to explore the historical elements of popular culture and discuss the significance of public history on modern society.

Chengzhi Lecture Hall is named after the most famous professor of our department: Lv Simian. We invite reputable professors and young outstanding scholars to keep us updated with the newest academic research findings in history. For instance, we had lectures such as *the Namban Art*[4] *of Japan in the 17th century, Where the land ends and the sea begins — a History of Portugal Ocean Empire* and *From Imperial Court (Miaotang) to all Corners of the Country (Jianghu) — the Spiritual Path of Ancient Chinese Literati.*

In May 2018, we participated in the "Book Recommender" initiative sponsored by Hanfen Building and the "April Book Day" of ECNU. So far we have had several interviews with many experts and scholars, and posted our articles along with book lists on our official Wechat account. Some of them include *the Politics of Ancient Rome*, *Contemporary Chinese Society and Life* and *the Academic Life of Mr. Chen Xulu.*

Additionally, academic forums are organized annually, such as The Shanghai History Undergraduate Forum organized by the combined History Departments of four universities: Fudan University, East China Normal University, Shanghai University and Shanghai Normal University. In 2018, we successfully hosted this forum, attracting 30 candidates from the four universities. They had a fruitful academic exchange with each other.

In 2009, the first National History Undergraduate Forum was initiated by the Youth History Club and has been successfully held for eleven sessions since it began. In August 2019, 36 undergraduate students from 19 universities from all over the country attended this forum and spent three days sharing their research findings. I am quite glad to be a part of this event as a volunteer or organizer. Above all, the most interesting event of our club is our portrayal[5] of historical drama. In the 4th Historical Drama Festival, I was lucky to be the director of the play *Search for the Missing Husband* and was there throughout the whole production process. It is my pleasure to share my experience with you.

E: What are the main steps of staging a chronicle play?

Z: At first, we choose the best scripts from the Drama Script Competition of Youth History Cup. This competition is jointly organized by Department of History and Youth History Club. We will pick up several outstanding works from the competition and then adapt them to a play. We barely make any changes about the plot. Instead, we work on the scripts to make it suitable for the stage performance, especially on making them more vivid and intelligible for the audience.

We are responsible for the whole rehearsing process, serving as directors, floor managers, dressing/ making-up artists and actors. When the script is ready, we recruit and interview the voluntary actors and actresses from the whole school. Then we start buying costumes and making the decoration props. During the rehearsal, we always exchange our opinions and learn something from each other to create a wonderful stage effect. If we find anything discordant[6] during the process, we will make adjustment until we find a satisfactory answer.

A successful drama performance is really time-consuming; it takes at least one and half months to get prepared. We have to squeeze out some spare time for rehearsal, mostly in the evening. The good thing is that everyone treats the rehearsal whole-heartedly, which makes for a cohesive teamwork environment.

E: Which of the performances has impressed you the most so far?

Z: I have to say the play *Search for the Missing Husband*, a play I fully participated in. The story happened during the Tianbao Years of Tang Dynasty, when the Anshi Rebellion broke out and people lived in despair. The war separated the heroine Qiao from her husband, and she embarked on a journey in search of him.

The story consists of four sections. The first section presents Qiao's separation from her husband. In the second, Qiao is rescued by Chen, an old woman. Chen's son is seriously sick but is forced to join the army. The third one shows Qiao's encounter with Yao (a guy from her neighbourhood), a young woman, an old woman and a runaway soldier. The young woman loses her son and husband because of the war. And the runaway soldier complains that if he didn't flee from the front line, he would be killed undoubtedly. The final section is a dream, in which the war is over and the villagers are blessed with a harvest. However, Qiao later finds that it is just a dream so she continues on the trip searching for her husband. According to the words of the people Qiao encountered in the story, much of the suffering was caused by the Anshi Rebellion. At the end the story still reveals a glimmer[7] of hope——the war will eventually cease and the vision of hope for peace will never be obliterated[8] .

The rehearsal mainly took place in the Law and Business Building or in the activity room of our department building. During the rehearsal, we burst into laughter on seeing Mrs Zhang's fake fall and Mr.Yao's attempting a northeast accent. We are also upset by the challenge of remembering walking position and wearing the shabby[9] costumes. We can be really disheartened by the poor rehearsal effect. With a lot of narrations in the script, we have tried many ways to achieve the best performance. I'm really grateful to all the cast members and staff for their dedication[10] and hard work.

Z: During the rehearsal of *Search for the Missing Husband* the heroine had to

1. Municipal Party Committee:
2. Municipal Academic Union:
3. renowned: adj.
4. the Namban Art:
5. portrayal: n.
6. discordant: adj.
7. glimmer: n.
8. obliterate: v.
9. shabby: adj.
10. dedication: n.

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Since ancient time, charity, as a basic virtue—a barometer of the economy and a balancer of the wealth gap—has always been highly praised by people throughout the world. However, when people are scrambling to become part of philanthropy, it is habitual for them only to care about how much e f ort they have put in instead of how many di f erences they have brought about, which is actually of paramount importance. More often than not, the commendation people place on charity far exceeds the benefits it brings to mankind, based on the following two aspects: the in f uence on charity recipients and on social climate.

For the poor who accept philanthropic aid, charity aggravates poverty under certain circumstances—our donating ‘fish’ cannot help the local ‘fishermen’ to be capable of fishing–thus leading to continuous poverty. For example, for remote villages in western mountainous areas, charity organizations donate packages laden with used or outdated items now and then, but in fact they are just giving away piles of junk in the name of Jesus, which of course cannot uproot the problem of poverty. Having access to good education and improvement of infrastructure are what can fundamentally and e f ectively help them. Nevertheless, not many donors are aware of this. Ignorant good deeds can only deal with the trouble of charity recipients super f cially, so that this so-called charity doesn’t live up to what we think it should be.

When it comes to social climate, the original intention of helping others may be lost because of a growing trend of bogus charity in today’s society, which might corrupt people’s inner compassion and undermine effective help for the people in need. It’s often reported in news that some charitarians are seeking worldly fame or propaganda by cheating in donating or getting rid of items of poor quality. When people do charity with a utilitarian view of getting rid of garbage, the virtue of charity starts to collapse. Furthermore, giving alms with a sense of superiority can not only hurt the feelings of the charity recipients, but also debase the standards of social conducts.

Henry David Thoreau once said in *‘Walden’*, “there are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the root, and it may be that he, who bestows the largest amount of time and money on the needy, is doing the most by his mode of life to produce the misery which he strives in vain to relieve.” What is now called charity, but just a form showing people’s ignorant kindness, is still inducing the public to rejoice and applaud for it. People get accustomed to calling charity a fabulous virtue, but they are unconscious that charity is now becoming less and less meaningful, and even brings about severe consequences to charity recipients and social atmosphere.

The problem of overrated virtue of charity isn’t likely to be solved overnight for the value itself isn’t developed overnight. The deep-rooted misunderstanding of traditional virtue ‘charity’ and today’s philanthropy is hard to be corrected. Charity, being colored by the characteristics of our age, is worthy of people’s attention and thinking. The way to ease the situation is undoubtedly complicated. In simple terms, just as Thoreau said “If thy hand has plenty, be liberal as the date tree; but if it a f ords nothing to give away, be an azad, or free man, like a cypress.”

Gift

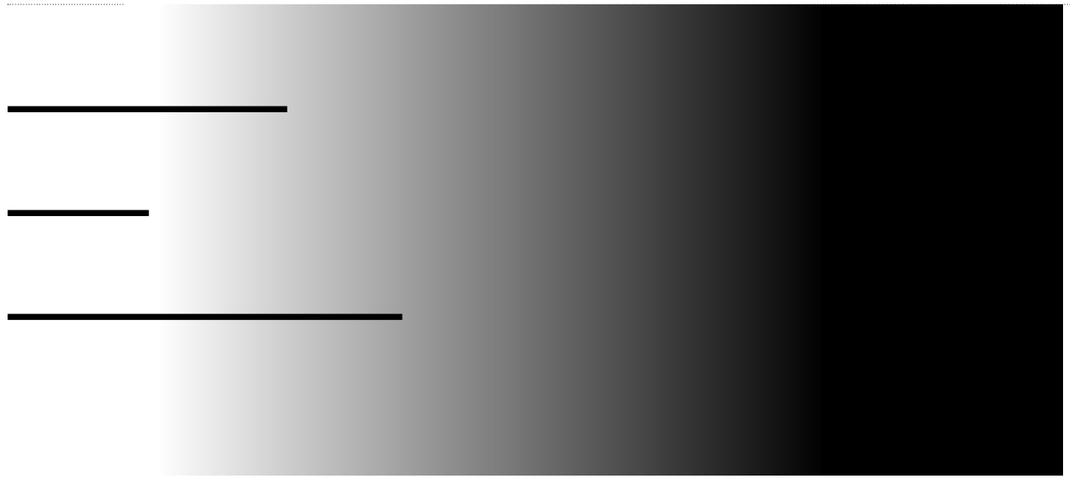
A day so happy.
Fog lifted early, I worked in the garden.
Hummingbirds were stopping over honeysuckle flowers.
There was no thing on earth I wanted to possess.
I knew no one worth envying him.
Whatever evil I had suffered, I forgot.
To think that once I was the same man did not embarrass me.
In my body I felt no pain.

《礼物》

No Man Is An Island

No man is an island,
Entire of itself,
Every man is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main.
If a clod be washed away by the sea,
Europe is the less.
As well as if a promontory were.
As well as if a manor of thy friend's
Or of thine own were:
Any man's death diminishes me,
Because I am involved in mankind,
And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;
It tolls for thee.

《谁都不是一座孤岛》



In our last issue, we visited Conor in *Sing Street*, a boy who channeled his frustrations through music to save himself from the hardships of reality. However, music itself could have different meanings of expression for different people. In this issue, we want to continue the theme of music by bringing you the story of an influential rock star: Freddie Mercury of Queen.

文 / 唐郁琪　美编 / 李晶瑾

Bohemian Rhapsody is a biographical drama about the life of British singer and songwriter, Freddie Mercury. The title “Bohemian Rhapsody” is also one of Queen’s classic songs. The movie starts from the formation of the band up until the famous Live Aid performance in 1985—it reveals the passion and drama the band experienced during those years.

The audience gets a first glimpse of Freddie’s life as a baggage handler at Heathrow Airport. One day after work, he goes to a pub where he happens to meet Mary Austin, who later becomes his girlfriend, and at the same time meets Brian and Roger from the band. After learning that the band’s following years, Queen keeps chasing their dreams of playing, producing and promoting the music they love.

While Freddie enjoys the fame and fortune that their music brings to him, he begins to feel lost and confused about the direction of his life. He cheats on his fiancée Mary by having an affair with Paul, the band manager. Freddie questions his own sexuality, and is torn apart by mixed feelings. He feels guilty for hurting Mary and doesn’t know how to come clean to her; he is perplexed of being judged by the society because homosexuality is still illegal. The audience begins to get a sense that this identity crisis is driving him crazy. During that time, Freddie wrote the famous song Bohemian Rhapsody. This 6-minute masterpiece incorporates a variety of music genres, including ballad, rock, and opera. The song hits the audience like a bullet – the listeners are deeply moved by the strong emotions embodied in it. Finally, Freddie gathers the courage to come clean to Mary. They end the engagement, but remain friends.

But Freddie is still lost: his affair with Paul continues on a downward spiral; his desires to try other genres of music conflict with the band’s direction; his relationship with bandmates worsens with each passing day. Eventually, he dissolves the band and begins his solo career. Ever since he left Queen, he found himself consumed by a life of alcohol, drugs, and an unhealthy relationship with his manipulative boyfriend, Paul. He is also bombarded with questions and critics from the public about his personal life. Then, Freddie finds out he has AIDS.

The devastating news comes at a time when Freddie is at the lowest point of his life, yet Mary is how he keeps himself together from falling apart. Freddie also finds his redemption in music. He proves himself with his talents and passion to silence the public critics. When he was on the stage of Live Aid that day, he was already very ill. But music sparked him, and he used it as medium to transmit power and hope to more people all over the world. He rocks!

As Freddie Mercury says, people should listen to music, think about music, and then make up their own minds as to what it says to them. In Bohemian Rhapsody, we can see how Freddie uses music as a way to save himself and make a difference in the lives of others. What does music do for you?

(To be continued in the next issue.)

1. perplex: v. 困惑，迷惑
2. ballad: n. 民谣，叙事歌谣
3. contract: v. 感染
4. spiral: n. 螺旋，漩涡
5. repressed: adj. 被压抑的
6. reconcile: v. 和好，和解

The University of Queensland, located in the city of Brisbane, is the biggest and most prestigious university in Australia. This university is also among the top 50 of world class universities. When I heard about the exchange programs organized by ECNU and the University of Queensland, I was so happy to sign up – and what do you know! – now I have the opportunity to live and study here for one semester. In addition to the education experience, I'm looking forward to experiencing the local culture. Afterwards, I want to share my feelings about Australia and provide some advice for my peers on cultural and education differences.

I am Ziying Shangguan of the English Department at ECNU, and I am studying English Literature at The University of Queensland. The university has a strong academic atmosphere demonstrated by the lit-up libraries at midnight. The study environment is quite different from that in China, though, with the first obstacle being communication in English. It's the mother-tongue in Australia so I must have the courage to speak more and not to rely on body language. Besides this, only English language is permitted in the classroom, so the requirements for English proficiency are exceptionally high. For homework, our teacher requires us to read a book of at least 300-400 pages per week and submit an essay about our overall thoughts and inferences from each book. It's interesting that in China teachers may require this type of essay once in every term while I am asked to submit one per week in Australia.

The MLA and APA formatting are also mandatory when writing essays here. At first, it cost me a lot of time to figure out how to format properly, so I was thrilled when I finally got it down. Since most of us have to study on our own, it's great to have teachers who always give examples and references according to the course material; otherwise I don't think many of the students would know what they're supposed to do. That's why it's important to talk to teachers in person after the class.

/ /

It is a precious opportunity for me to study abroad. So I was determined to make the best use of it the moment I arrived there. What impressed me most at the very beginning was the green grass and blue skies when I landed on campus, which reminded me of “Min Da Huang”, my ECNU campus in the suburban area of Minhang District, Shanghai. I’ve learned that almost 30% of Australians are born overseas. SM

"A Moveable Feast": My Fulbright Year at Harvard (2018-2019)

"If you are lucky enough to have lived in Paris as a young man, then wherever you go for the rest of your life it stays with you, for Paris is a moveable feast," wrote Ernest Hemingway to a friend about his time in Paris in the 1920s. To some extent, this past year of mine at Harvard University as a Fulbright visiting research scholar may also be called a "moveable feast" for me. The rich academic atmosphere, superb research resources, and exciting enrichment events that I have enjoyed so much will definitely stay with me for a long time.

Academic Atmosphere

As a world-renowned private research university, Harvard University is known for its competitive admission, academic reputation, and leadership in cutting-edge research. Apart from regular classes, there are numerous other opportunities to engage in academic explorations and intellectual inquiry. Except for the summer intersession, on bulletin boards across the entire campus you can always find information about lectures, talks, and seminars, which constitute an active academic calendar. Among other things, the Mahindra Humanities Center (with Prof. Homi Bhabha as the founding director) seminars, the speeches and conversations at Harvard Kennedy School's John F. Kennedy Forum, and the events hosted by Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies are my favorites. Academics, media professionals, and former politicians and diplomats are brought to campus to share their latest research, personal experiences, and firsthand insights into various issues, including the most pressing challenge facing us today. Sitting in these events, you will no longer confine yourself within the narrow field that you are specialized in but tend to reach out and find other disciplines equally, if not more, exciting.

Located in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard is also close to other institutions in the historic cities of Cambridge and Boston, such as Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Tufts University, Boston University, Boston College, etc. So, students and scholars at Harvard can also benefit from many nearby institutions on both banks of the Charles River.

Research Resources

At Harvard, you also have easy access to numerous valuable research resources housed at Harvard libraries, museums, and other research facilities. As a memorial to Harry Elkins Widener, Class of 1907, who perished aboard the Titanic in 1912, Widener Library is Harvard's flagship library, holding over three million volumes, including the Gutenberg Bible (the first major work printed in Europe with movable metal type). Another popular library is Lamont Library which houses the primary undergraduate collection in humanities and social sciences. While at Widener you can be easily overwhelmed for its huge collections, at Lamont you will enjoy the easy accessibility and the spacious tables and carrels. Here, you can certainly bury yourself for a presentation, a course paper, or the exams, but you can also hang out with your friends at the café.

Situated between Widener and Lamont, the Houghton Library

the pop singer Bernice Johnson Reagon said: “Life’s challenges are not supposed to paralyze you, they’re supposed to help you discover who you are.” Having witnessed the inauguration of the 29th President of Harvard University Lawrence S. Bacow, and German Chancellor Angela D. Merkel’s well-received speech at the 368th Commencement, both in Tercentenary Theatre, Harvard Yard, I was so fortunate to spend my Fulbright year at Harvard. Actually, the 2018-2019 year is a transformative experience] ɹ ɣ la a era Ķ lbrie5 as

1985 East China Normal University, BA in Library & Information Science
1995 Waseda University, BA in Political Science
2002 Baruch College, CUNY, MS in Business Computer Information Systems
2015-2016 Nachi Robotics, Inc. Executive General Manager
2017-Present Hitachi Kokusai America, Ltd. Manager of Accounting/Finance/HR/IT

Dao Yin: The Difference / / ECNU Ever Made to My Life

I entered ECNU in autumn 1981 from ECNU No. 2 High School with some of my high school mates, and soon I made many new friends from all over the six provinces in Eastern China. Four years of friendship with my classmates and schoolmates became one of the most important and memorable part of my life. Besides keeping high academic records, I participated in various extracurricular activities as the class commissary in charge of organization in the 1st and 2nd year, and the committee member of ECNU Student Association in the 3rd and 4th year. Through performance hosting, sports games engagements, travel arrangements, debate club activity and ECNU newspaper contributions, I gained many leadership opportunities as a college student. Organizational skills learned in my 17-20 age have contributed to my academy and career in China, Japan and the United States for decades now.

Since my graduation in July 1985, I have met numerous ECNU alumni in China, Japan and the United States from time to time, including my wife (Foreign Languages Department, 1990) who I met at Waseda University in Japan. While having all kinds of occupations and living in different places in the world today, we are always connected by ECNU tradition as “seek the truth, be creative and be a model for others”. While you can tell an ECNU alumnus’ usually gentle and cultivated low-tone style compared with those from other prestige universities, our alumni are thriving in all the aspects of society with leadership skills that benefited from ECNU culture. Personally at work, I have formed my managerial style as calm with more diplomacy and less enforcement. On the other hand, I believe that being a role model for others is a very important part of management. For example, through working at different companies, I have continued my office arrival time punctual for decades now.

Thanks to the social media such as WeChat, from two years ago, I have been able to connect to ECNU alumni in the United States especially in the New York area. Through my participation in alumni gathering and other ECNU related events, I made ECNU friends including former ECNU President Yu, Lizhong (Geography, 82), Ren, Songgao (Education, 83), Wei, Guoping (Chemistry, 68), Zhou Xiaoxia (Foreign Language, 86) and many others.

Just like we learned about each other as classmates or schoolmates during our school years in ECNU, now we are exchanging our knowledge and experience as alumni with joy and happiness. When we meet, everyone has saying and listening as a proud member of ECNU family. I am always glad to see ECNU alumni live in every corner of the world and to hear their different stories of life. I value our friendship in school years in ECNU as well as in alumni society now, which is as important as our personal achievement in both academy and occupation. In other words, if we ever made a difference as the ECNU alumni, it was our university that ever made us do so. I believe what I learned in ECNU beyond academy, or say its tradition and culture, will penetrate my life with value unmeasurable.

Last but never the least, then ECNU President Liu, Funan and all professors and teachers who taught me became my mentors forever. They not only instructed me with knowledge and skills, but also guided me to later study, work and live in different countries with a learning and teaching mindset.

In the beginning of November 2019, Dao Yin and his campaign team started his running for New York City Queens Borough President special election that will be held in February 2020.