Short-Stay Study Abroad Program Report

During the short-stay study abroad program, I mainly visited the IBM Thomas J. Watson research center in Yorktown Height New York USA. As you may know, IBM is one of the best IT companies. At IBM many research works have been conducted to solve the practical problem for their users and industry. The IBM Thomas J. Watson research center is one of the IBM research headquarters. It was founded in 1961. There are more than thousands of top-notch researchers in various fields working at this research center. The environment of the research center is nice and peaceful. It is really a great place to do research. I did many productive works there.

IBM Thomas J. Watson research center in Yorktown Height New York USA

Before leaving, I had to prepare many documents for the visa document, the travel plan, and the research plan.

Firstly, the visa was the most difficult task and the most complicated issue during the preparation of the short-stay study abroad program. Since this program allowed a student to work together with the host research institute, the working visa is necessary. In my case, I had to apply for the J1 visa, which is the visa for an exchange student. To apply the visa, the documents from the sponsor institute, in my case IBM, was important. However, in my case this also caused many difficulties to obtain the documents because the procedure of IBM for issuing the certificate document was very slow due to the hierarchical structure of the organization. This limitation made the document process became the main problem. There were many steps needed to be processed. As a result, it took almost four months to get the necessary documents for applying the visa. Therefore, I would like to advice other applicants to make this process as early as possible if you would like to visit the big company like IBM.

Secondly, the travel plan was also another difficult task to work with because there were many uncertainties such as transportation and accommodation. Since this IBM research center is established in the extremely remote area, which is many miles from the New York city, finding and planning for the accommodation places and the transport method became one of the hard problem. Based on this difficulty, I would suggest other applicants who want to do research in such remote area to prepare the driving license so that you can rent a car and drive to work. It would be better to rent a car for using in the area outside the city since the transportation is not comfortable as same as the city.

Thirdly, the research plan was also one of the most important task to prepare so that we could do the productive works at the host research institute. Therefore, before leaving, I spent a lot of time to plan the research work by connecting my current research study with the latest research work conducted by the host institute at IBM. Also, I did video conference, Skype, with the researcher at IBM, who was my mentor, in order to discuss the possibility and determine the research plan. As a result, we could make a milestone for checking whether our plan kept progress or not. This preparation helped me to work effectively when I did the short-stay study abroad program. I would advise other applicants to do your best for the preparation process, in particular the research plan.

During the short-stay study abroad program, I had learned many things. One of the great thing that I got was an opportunity to talk and discuss with the top researcher, who is specialist in my research field, semantic web and knowledge curation, at IBM. Based upon this opportunity, I got many fruitful comments to improve my current research on knowledge graph construction from natural language text. For example, to make the current framework that I proposed become more and more interesting, he suggested me to conduct the validation across many dataset and advise me to present in depth results to emphasize the necessary of the framework. Furthermore, many top researchers at IBM demonstrated their on-going research works to me. This opportunity inspired me a lot because things that they presented were cutting-edge technology. Moreover, the most important thing was that they also allowed me to use their system. This was a key of the collaborative work. Using their system can directly improve my current system significantly. Basically, it is not provided to outsider like me. Apart from the technical stuffs, I also got the opportunity to learn the culture of IBM by attending the regular meeting of the research team that I joined. Based on the observation on such meeting, I learned many culture of my team, which could reflect the whole company. Usually, I did not have much chance to understand the characteristic of the company for doing research. However, this chance expanded my research horizon very much. I totally believed that this thing that I had been learned from visiting at the IBM research center could help me to improve the quality of my PhD research as well as my research career in the future.

In addition, during my visiting IBM period, the collaboration workshop was held at the IBM Thomas J. Watson research center. This workshop invited many PhD student from top universities in USA to present their on-going research studies so that IBM and universities could find the common interest and do the collaborative research work together. I got a couple of chances to talk with other PhD students. This helped me to expand my network connection in my field.
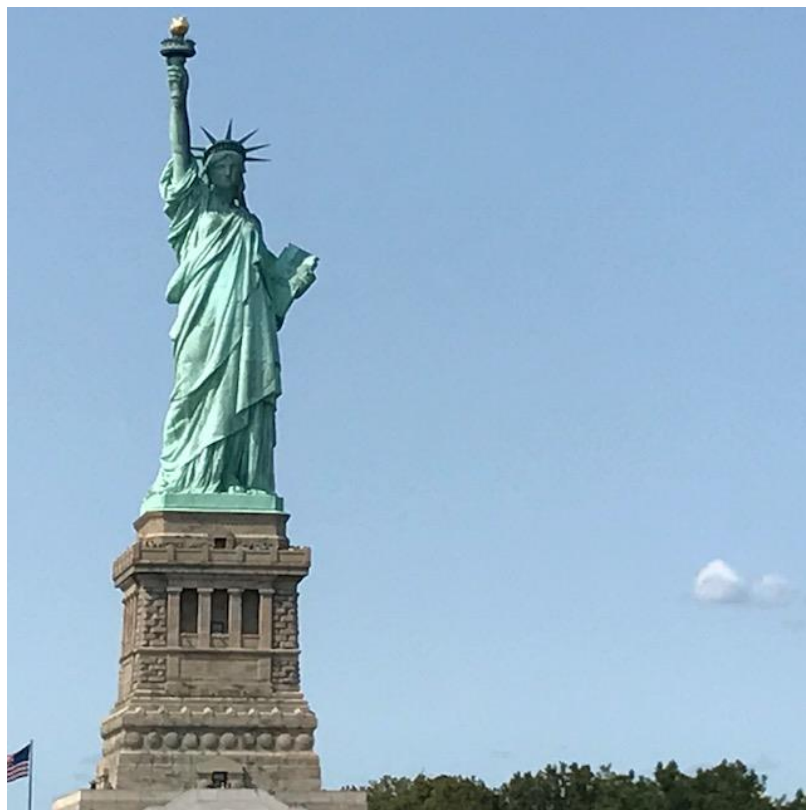
All in all, the research activities at IBM broaden my research perspective and provide me many fruitful new ideas for continuing conducting the high quality research. Also, the final outcome of the program is extremely valuable to my PhD study because my mentor at IBM and I can determine a common goal and the future direction to collaboratively conduct the research together.

Apart from the research activities, I also have an opportunity to visit many museums such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, American Museum of Natural History and National Museum of Modern Art in New York city during the weekend. This opportunity also give me to learn various art and culture of the other country. It expand my point of view and let me start thinking about the global awareness.

For the daily life, living expense in New York city is almost similar to the living the expense in Tokyo. English is the communication in the daily life. At IBM research center, English also has been used as the main language for the communication in the research. I would like to suggest that around 800 of TOEIC score is enough for communication with other researchers while for the daily life the TOEIC score of 600 may be required. By the way, IBM is the international environment. Some researcher may use their native language for communication such as Spanish, Japanese.

In my opinion, the short-stay study abroad program provide me a wonderful experience to learn not only the technical research but also give me chance to explore the art culture of the visiting country. I therefore would like to suggest other Sokendai students to apply this short-stay study abroad program. The benefit of the short-stay study abroad program is magnificent and the experience form this program is very precious. Lastly, I would like to thank Sokendai's short stay aboard program for providing financial support. This would never be happened without this grant.

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