

Greetings from the President's Office

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My Favorite Study Spot in the Library – The Place of Marx and I

AIU's unique education has been gaining high national acclaim. We should not merely be proud, but increase our efforts for higher acclaim. And one of the facilities which enable us to maintain our unique education is our library, which is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. This library was designed in a semicircular shape with a generous use of beautiful Akita cedar wood, which offers a relaxed atmosphere and space where people can devote themselves to their study. The terraced bookshelves, which rise upward from the center of the hemicycle, will remind you of an amphitheater in ancient Rome. It is a library worthy of the alias, "Book Colosseum."

This is a masterpiece, designed by the architect Mr. Mitsuru Senda, and has received several international awards, such as the "2010 Architecture Forum Award," "JIA Award (The Japan Institute of Architects Award)," and "BCS Prize." I furtively observe the students and it is most pleasant to see them scattered about the library studying. But it is not always "pleasant" when it comes to studying. Rather, generally speaking, people study because they have to. Literally in Japanese, the term 勉強 (studying) consists of the two characters 強いて (force people) and 勉める (study). Students may therefore attempt to make studying more interesting, and one approach is to find your favorite seat or area to study in the library.

A few years ago, I had an interesting experience. It was when I visited Nanjing University in China. While taking a walk around campus, I saw several students come out of a dormitory and sit on the grass outside, or take a slow stroll on a pathway while reading an English textbook aloud. I have heard that a room in this dormitory is shared among eight students, so it seemed preferable practice to read English phrases aloud outside. When I asked them on how they motivated themselves to study, a variety of creative and ingenious methods were explained, which sounded adorable to me. The most fascinating answer was, "studying in different areas of the library every hour or for every subject, in order to refresh my mind. This way, I know how many hours I studied by the number of areas I studied at today." And actually, this reminded me of my own method. As a doctoral student of Indiana University, United States from 1973 to 1978, where I later earned my Doctor of Business Administration degree, I mostly spent my time on studying not in our office for doctoral students, but in the library. My job as a Teaching Associate (where doctoral students teach undergraduate courses),

kept my life hectic, but I assume that I managed to still study an average of seven hours a day. The reason the number precisely comes to mind is because I would start studying in my favorite carrel on the third floor of the Indiana University library, which is 10 stories high, and I had a policy to change carrels every hour to the above floor. After seven hours, it was usually past 11 p.m., and my carrel came up to the ninth floor. There was one more floor, the 10th floor, and I do not exaggerate when I say that there was a huge inner struggle within myself to move up to the 10th floor or not. Because reaching the top floor indicates that I studied for eight hours. I could not help myself from smiling a grin of satisfaction on the 10th floor with no one else there, and I rewarded myself afterwards with a cold beer in my dorm room.

This is my little way of studying at the library, and great people in history have their own ways too of studying. And I am most impressed, for instance, by the famous Karl Marx, who finished writing “Das Kapital” even in a life of deprivation and exile in the UK. It is said that he devoted himself to his research and writing from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. at a specific desk at the British Library for almost 30 years. I had an opportunity about 30 years ago to visit the library and see the actual reading desk where Marx used to sit. There is a story about the desk; a library staff member during those days kept the seat available for only Marx, saying “this desk is occupied by a person who uses it every day; no one else is permitted to sit here.” I think that persons like Marx were able to keep his concentration on his research and writing, and thus, did not need to change his environment, such as changing desks every hour. By the way, I would like to tell you that the British Library was also a fantastic facility designed like a circular dome. To conclude my essay, I would like all AIU students to make full use of your privilege to utilize our amazing library.

Note:

In this essay, content related to the description of my study method at Indiana University library are overlapped with a previous article, “Dear TUS students! Develop your own study method.” issued in 2013, which I wrote under the request by the alumni of Tokyo University of Science.



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