

Three Universities

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During my sabbatical year (from April of 2012 through March of 2013), I visited many memorable places in America and England, but I'd especially like to share my impressions of three remarkable universities: the University of California, Riverside, the University of Michigan, and the University of Oxford.

The University of California, Riverside
April 1st through June 30th

When I was a boy, I lived in Riverside in the desert of Southern California. Just past our back yard rose tawny mountains, bristling with sage, cactus, and rocks and teeming with creatures, from horny toads and rosy boas to roadrunners and rabbits, a rich place to explore and play. Because of that past, and because UCR is home to the Eaton Collection of Science Fiction and Fantasy, the largest such collection in the world, I began my sabbatical there.

UCR began in 1907 as the “ UC Citrus Experiment Station ” and became one of the ten public University of California campuses in 1959. Today it has a modest academic reputation, being ranked 101st among the best American universities. UCR has a large student population. In 2012, 30,395 people applied to the school, 19,062 were accepted, and 4,034 enrolled, bringing the total number of students to 21,005 (including 2,466 graduate students). It’s not cheap: in 2013–2014, the tuition and fees are \$13,869 for in-state (California resident) undergraduates and \$36,747 for out-of-state ones.

UCR is an oasis in the desert. When I visited there it was hot and dry even in April. It has a 4.9 square kilometer campus, made beautiful by eucalyptus and pepper trees, flowering shrubs, green lawns, cute lizards, pretty birds, and modern buildings, all centered around a

49-meter tall carillon bell tower. UCR is not closely integrated into the city of Riverside (population 310,000), for the campus lies discrete from the neighboring residential areas and far from the downtown, with the result that most students probably need cars.

The caretaker of the Eaton Collection, Dr. Melissa Conway, was helpful and friendly, the main library well organized. Anyone can enter it and access the stacks, though a card is required to check out books. Walking through the campus, I was impressed by the many Asian, Hispanic, and African American students chatting, snacking, and studying everywhere. Indeed, in 2012 *US News* ranked UCR as the 8th most ethnically diverse university in the USA, when 35.7% of the students were Asian American, 31.5% Hispanic American, 17% white, 6.6% African American, 2.6% other or unknown, and 5.5% international. UCR offers its students a variety of financial aid options to help them graduate.

My impression of UCR, then, was of a beautiful, friendly, and ethnically diverse desert university. One of America's strongest and most difficult traits is its multi-



The UCR Campus and Bell Tower

racial composition, and it felt good to see so many young people of color working for a university education. I hope that they may achieve their American dreams.

The University of Michigan

July 1st through September 30th

From the desert to the Midwest. From 1984 through 1992 I attended graduate school at the University of Michigan (U-M) in Ann Arbor (population 114,000), earning there my MA and PhD in English Language and Literature and discovering that I enjoy discussing literature and life with young people. And so I spent the second stage of my sabbatical there.

Established in 1817, U-M numbers among the top five universities in the USA and the top twenty in the world. U-M is a larger public institution than UCR. In 2012 45,000 people applied for admission, with about a third being accepted and about 6,000 enrolling, making the U-M student population 43,426, including 12,714 graduate students. U-M is less racially diverse than UCR, with 65% of its undergraduates being white, 12.1% Asian American, 5.8% African American, 4.1% Hispanic American, and 5.7% international. U-M is more expensive than UCR: For the 2013–14 academic year, tuition will cost in-state (Michigan resident) undergraduates \$14,618 and out-of-state ones \$43,036.

The U-M campus occupies 2.88 square kilometers and includes giant classroom and office buildings, high quality museums and libraries, a large arboretum, and numerous majestic oak and elm trees, cheeky squirrels, and charming robins and gold finches. Everywhere flowers appeal to the eyes and lawns to the body. And U-M is integrated into downtown Ann Arbor, uniting “ town and [academic] gown. ” Many stores, restaurants, and apartments lie within easy walking distance of campus. When I stayed at U-M last year, I found that those traits were much the same as when I was a student there, and that the Harlan Hatcher Library is still useful and well equipped, with 3.5 million volumes. As with UCR, anyone may enter the library, though a card is needed to check out books.

I also discovered, however, that some things have changed at U-M. For one thing, brand new buildings

have sprouted up everywhere like giant glass and concrete mushrooms: a state-of-the-art children’s hospital, an extension to the Museum of Art, an expansion of the football stadium (capacity 109,901), large dormitories, and more. For another, the town has lost many of its small, independent shops, which have been replaced by chain stores, and the once myriad used and independent bookstores have been reduced to three. U-M’s expansion and Ann Arbor’s homogenization have cost them some of their former charm.

Before my sabbatical, I had heard that, like the USA itself, American colleges and universities were in dire financial straits, forced to reduce classes and staff and increase tuition. And because the state of Michigan gives almost no money to higher education now, how, I wondered, could U-M do so much construction? Because of wealthy alumni donors which is why the new buildings bear names like the Stephen M. Ross School of Business. U-M’s multi-billion dollar endowment is the 7th largest among American universities.

U-M and Ann Arbor are surrounded by financially challenged Michigan cities like Detroit, which in July of 2013 filed for bankruptcy, and the contrast between the thriving university and the declining cities around it highlights some of the inequalities in American society. Elite universities attract top-class faculty and students and build new structures for them with their big endowments and government contracts, which are less available for less prestigious institutions. U-M is a vibrant educational



The U-M Campus and English Department

institution well integrated into its city, but its conspicuous construction makes me worry about America.

The University of Oxford

October 1st through March 31st

From America to England. I first visited Oxford in 1994 to present a paper at a conference. When I tried to peek inside the University of Oxford's famous Bodleian Library, the entrance guard asked me, "Are you a reader?" and I innocently answered, "Yes, I love reading books," and he sharply informed me that only official Readers could enter the library. Apart from that embarrassing encounter, Oxford enchanted me. Its narrow roads winding round weathered, honey-colored buildings punctuated by tall steeples and grotesque gargoyles made me look forward to doing research at the Bodleian (triumphantly as a Reader after eighteen years!) for the last six months of my sabbatical.

History and culture saturate Oxford (population about 151,000), especially its ubiquitous university. Tracing its origin back to 1096, the university is comprised of thirty-eight independent colleges like Christ Church and New College, many dating back to the Middle Ages. Oxford is one of the top ranked universities in the world, boasting 51 Nobel Prize laureates and possessing many fine museums, like the Ashmolean, which displays artifacts from many cultures and eras, and the University Museum of Natural History, which houses everything from a tyrannosaurus to a dodo. Oxford University students, then, feel part of both a large and prestigious university and of an intimate and unique college within it.

The University of Oxford is somewhat expensive. College tuition is free for UK and EU citizens, but costs £ 6,157 for overseas students while the university tuition for an undergraduate degree in English Language and Literature costs £ 9,000 for UK and EU citizens, £ 13,200 for overseas students. I found no racial data for students on the university website, but I did learn that typically 17,000 people annually apply for admission to the university, which offers about 3,000 new places per year, and that about 8,000 students of the 20,000 enrolled (undergraduates and graduate students) are foreign.

With 11 million volumes arranged on 190 kilometers of shelves (growing by five kilometers per year), the Bodleian Library is mind boggling, and it felt quite a privilege to become a Reader with access to the holdings. However, all the books must be read on the premises, and I ended up using the Oxford Public Library nearly as much as the Bodleian, because I could easily enter and check books out from the former.

If Oxford is the city and university of "gleaming spires," it is also a city and university of forbidding walls. Unlike UCR and U-M, the University of Oxford radiates exclusivity. In addition to only Readers being permitted to enter the Bodleian Library, the high walls of the college campuses are passable only through porter's lodges like castle gatehouses. Not a few colleges are closed to the public, and those that are open are only so for a few hours per day and most of those charge fees ranging from £ 2 to £ 8.50. The colleges of course cannot permit tourists to traipse freely about the school grounds, distracting students and faculty from their academic pursuits, but the system is off-putting.

I did find a splendid way to visit the colleges: attend their Evensongs. For free anyone may attend these evening Anglican services featuring the different college choirs singing psalms and hymns. Sitting in the candlelit chapels as the organ music thrummed through my body and the pure voices soared through the ceilings left atheist me humming with joy.

A more unsettling feature of Oxford was the rather large



The Bodleian Library Entrance

number of poor people, often accompanied by patient dogs, quietly asking for money outside colleges or shops. The gap between the elite education going on behind the walls and the poor people begging outside was remarkable. It recalled the U-M's new buildings and Detroit's financial woes.

Despite the charisma of the university, then, at times my rich experience in Oxford was difficult, partly due to the long, gray, cold British winter, but also partly due to Oxford's mixed nature as both a popular tourist destination and an elite educational institution. Perhaps because I'm American, I felt more comfortable at UCR and U-M on their welcoming campuses school buildings in public parks than at the University of Oxford on its constraining campus private castles in a city. A wonderful place to be a student or teacher, it may feel cold to a long-term visitor or poor resident.

The University as a Special Place

The university is ideally a place where students and staff may affordably, comfortably, and effectively pursue higher education and research. A place where they may develop the ability to think critically through contact with a variety of ideas and approaches to learning and understanding. And a place where they may belong to a special academic community integrated into the larger external community. I believe that UCR, U-M, Oxford University and Fukuoka University all achieve those goals to some degree. I thank my colleagues and Fukuoka University for helping me have an unforgettable experience abroad.

* Data is from the UCR, U-M, and Oxford University websites:

<http://www.ucr.edu/>

<http://www.umich.edu/>

<http://www.ox.ac.uk/>



ニーミドルスクールという結構評価の高い学校に決まりました。手続きは、それほど面倒ではなかったのですが、予防接種に関しては日本で受けた予防接種は、ほとんどすべて無効でした。学校法で決まっているワクチン接種を受けた証明書を提出しない限り、学校には受け入れてもらえないので、スーパーの薬局で予約して予防接種を済ませましたが、もし、このままアメリカの学校に残るのであれば、ハイスクールの時か、大学に進学後にもう一度受けることが義務になっていました。学校には、それぞれマスコットがあり、アルバニーミドルスクールのマスコットは、コブラでした。(ちなみに、カリフォルニア大学バークレー校のマスコットはもちろん熊です。キャンパスは広く奇麗で、森がありリスがたくさん居て癒されます。) 黒い体操服に金色のコブラが前に大きく印刷されています。正規の服装で来ることが要求されるときには、このコブラの体操服を着ることになります。日本ではちょっと考えられないことです。校則は、差別をしない、セクハラをしないなど行動に関するものが少数あるだけで、服装に関するものや髪型や色に関する制約は一切ありません。息子は、自由な雰囲気がとても気に入ったようですぐに馴染んで2週間もした頃には英語で寝言を言っていました。羨ましい程の吸収力です。

また、ちょっと前までは、アメリカでは車が無いと生活できないと言われていましたが、これは今でもそうです。着いてすぐの頃、買い物や大学へ通うためにバートという公共の電車の駅に歩いて行っていました。毎日かなりの坂道を移動したために足首に疲労が溜まりものすごく腫れて2週間程動かせなくなりかなり困りました。車が着てからは、本当に楽です。また、電話。携帯電話は当たり前ですが、どんなお年寄りでもスマートフォンを利用しています。もちろん、そこはカリフォルニア州です。アップルの本社がクパチーノにあることもあり、iPhoneやiPadの所有率はとても高いです。私は、着いてすぐに電話が必要だったので、とりあえずプリペイドの2つ折の安い携帯電話にしたのですが、スマートフォン以外の電話を取り出すのはかなり恥ずかしい感じがしました。また、パソコンは当然アップルのMacがほとんどで、たまにDELLやIBM、Toshibaの製品を見かけるくらいでした。

しかし、今では車と携帯電話の他にインターネットに常時必要なときに繋がることが要求されます。まず、何か手続きをしようと思って役所に電話すると、役所のHPから必要書類をダウンロードしてそれに記入してメールに添付して送信するように言われます。先方にインターネットの環境が無いので電話していることを説明しても、スターバックスかどこかで繋いで手続きをするように言われるだけでどうにもなりません。スターバックスには必ずAT&Tの無料の無線LANが設置してあり、誰でも利用できるのですが、それだけにセキュリティは全くありません。カード番号や個人情報などを盗まれるようなことは避けたいので、VerizonとT-mobileの2つの通信会社と携帯型WiFiルータを契約して帰国直前まで利用していました。日本とは違い使い放題のプランがないので1台では通信容量が不足するのと結構通信が不安定になることがあるので2台持つことにしました。

まだまだ、銀行のこと、運転免許のこと、アダルトスクール(外国人向けの語学学校)のこと、ワインのこと、パブのこと、私の使う英語と発音のことなど書きたいことはあるのですが、生活に関してはこの辺で。

小林昭七先生

カリフォルニア大学バークレー校を在外研究の場所として選んだのは、そこの数学教室に名誉教授として小林昭七先生がいらっしゃるからでした。情報幾何学という統計学と微分幾何学の両方にまたが



研究室から見た学内の風景

る分野を研究テーマとしている自分にとってまたとないチャンスだと思っていました。小林先生が学科長とその秘書に話を通してくださっていたので、大学ではとてもスムーズに研究を進めることができました。5月にパークレーに戻られたらご挨拶に伺おうと思いメールを送信したところ、心臓病で入院しているので、少なくとも後2～3ヶ月は戻れないという返事が来ました。私は、小林先生がパークレーに戻られたときには何か研究成果について報告できるようにしたいと思い、かなりの勢いで計算を進めました。御陰で、当初の予定を大幅に上回る成果を得ることができました。しかし、残念ながら小林先生はアメリカに戻る途中で亡くなりました。大学1年生のときに取ったゼミのテキストが小林先生の「曲線と曲面の微分幾何」であり、2年生の時に読んだ本が野水・小林として有名な微分幾何学の本でした。その先生の下で研究できることに感激していたのですが、叶いませんでした。このことが唯一の残念な点でした。

最後に

最後になりましたが、在外研究に関しては多くの方々のお世話になりました。この場を借りてお礼申し上げます。また、このような制度をもつ福岡大学を非常に誇らしく思っております。この制度が、今後も多くの教員に利用され刺激となりますように。

