

OPENERS

Creating Your Own Internships

by Lyn C. A. Gardner

Without a library school in Virginia, students attending distance education programs might feel that there are limited feasible internship possibilities. However, many schools, like my alma mater Florida State University (FSU), are actually quite open to students taking the initiative, contacting local libraries, and creating their own internships. This is a great chance for the student to explore a specific area of library science in which the student is considering a career, thus gaining both a better sense of whether this is the desired specialty and providing some of that all-important experience when it comes time to apply for full-time jobs.

In addition, this is an important opportunity for libraries, particularly now, when economic circumstances frequently mean that there are less funds or staff hours available for completing special projects. Librarians can choose to take the first step by contacting some of the distance education programs which Virginia students might be likely to attend and registering their library or project for consideration. While a certain amount of training is involved, graduate student workers are likely to be intelligent and dedicated, with an enthusiasm for the field that has led them to find ways to earn a degree despite the lack of Virginia offerings.

Having long been fascinated by the collections in special libraries, I approached a museum library

near my home. The Mariners' Museum (TMM) technical services librarian and archives team were both happy to work with me, providing oversight and training. Their ready suggestion of projects indicated that they actually had quite a number of activities that would have benefitted from the assistance of interns. The process

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for qualifying this site and registering my internships was quite simple. After confirming with the FSU internship coordinator that local internships were possible, I discussed the details with my two supervisors for the two separate projects at TMM. Then I provided them with the link to the online FSU questionnaire that would allow them to register the site. This included a brief summary of each project, with a description of the process and expected outcome. For each internship, my mentors spent about five hours total in training and oversight; in return, I was able to contribute between fifty to sixty hours of work toward the advancement of each project.

The first project, for Technical

Services Librarian Lisa DuVernay, involved the cleanup of "in" analytics. The library's catalog posed certain problems. Designed by museum professionals as a comprehensive catalog for library items, archival materials, and museum artifacts, the catalog lacked full MARC functionality; further, in the retrospective conversion phase, the library had hired temporary typists to enter the records at speed, providing keyword-search functionality but neither authority control nor a check on the duplication of records due to separate subject, title, and author cards. The project provided a lot of first-hand training in constructing and checking subject headings and other access points. In addition to learning to use cataloging resources such as Classification Plus, the LC Subject Cataloging Manuals, and the Data Research Associates (DRA) site, I also learned to think creatively about what sorts of searches patrons at a maritime research library might be likely to enter, and to use local sources to create and check authority files, such as *Aak to Zumbra: A Dictionary of the World's Watercraft*, *Brassey's Book of Battles*, and other nautical dictionaries and gazetteers. Because many of the analytic records were created with few subject access points (and those that did exist were often not in the approved LCSH form), research was often needed to ensure that patrons would be able to find needed materials. My mentor showed me how to determine what the official names of battles

were, what the current approved geographic names were for places mentioned solely by their equivalents in other centuries (particularly the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries), and how to check dictionaries for synonyms that might constitute approved LCSH. If none of these resources pointed to an approved LCSH, DuVernay taught me how to construct a needed heading (TMM is a NACO library). While this project was too vast to complete in a single internship, I did contribute to improved access for a number of records, while gaining valuable hands-on cataloging experience.

The second internship involved processing a collection of sound recordings for the archives. The Mariners' Museum Audio Recordings Collection includes both collected works of maritime interest, such as sea shanties and maritime songs by a variety of performers, and recordings created by the museum, including captured maritime sounds such as steamboat whistles, a radio show featuring museum personnel from TMM's earliest days, and an oral history project sponsored by the library. With material dating back to 1931, there were many rare items in an extremely poor state of preservation. There were no catalog records other than the brief descriptions attached to the accession records; the handwritten card catalog for

the archives mentioned "Sound recordings" or "The Mariners' Museum Recordings" with no further description or points of access. Assistant to the Archivist Gregg Cina and Archives Technician Marc Nucup provided guidance in the proper processing of the collection—everything from local format for labeling folders and boxes to the organization of

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the collection and the creation of the finding aid. I began with book-knowledge concerning the basic philosophy of housing and organizing archival materials, and gained practical experience in both, as well as an understanding of how to create vital access points. I was able to process most of the phonograph records, leaving the tapes and further recommendations for a future worker. I assigned numbers to phonograph records, making descriptive notes about each item as I did so, and writing appropriate information

on the sleeves. I did what I could to improve the condition of the materials, including full rehousing in acid-free containers with proper support and any appropriate cleaning. My finding aid, detailed to the item level, now provides access to a collection that the public—and many staff—didn't know existed. Before I left the project, I compiled detailed notes about the care and handling of the collection, the condition of the items, and future preservation and processing needs.

Whether you are a student, a current library employee, or both, creating your own internships can provide a big bonus both for your professional life and the ongoing life of the libraries you love. If you work at a library with special projects that could benefit from the services of an intern, I highly recommend preparing an overview and submitting it to distance education library science programs—or even local schools whose fields of study might be relevant (such as history, in the case of a museum library). This is one creative solution that not only helps overcome the problems of a small budget and staff, but also gives added value to the library itself—benefitting your patrons while at the same time providing highlights that might enhance future requests for funding. **VI**