Undergraduate Library Internships and Professional Success

Gettysburg College

Gettysburg College Musselman Library

Internships at Musselman Library

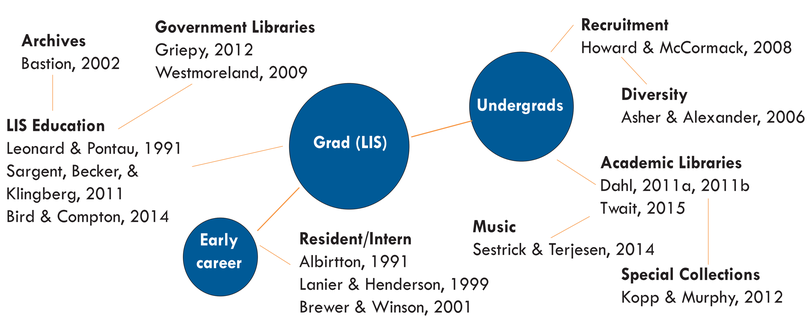
Established in 1998, the Musselman Library internship program has grown from a single, year-long internship for a recent graduate to several endowed, semester- and summer-long internships for current undergraduates that provide students with a range of internships.

Barbara Holley '54 Internship
One-year, paid internship with benefits for a recent college graduate interested in library and information science to work in all departments.

Robert '44 and Esther Kenyon Fortenbaugh '46 Internship
Semester-long (8 hours per week), paid internship for a current student; opportunity to work in a specific library department, such as Special Collections & Archives, Research & Instruction, Music, and Technical Services, as well as other areas like marketing and exhibits.

Diane Werley Smith '73 Internship in Special Collections
Summer-long, paid internship (10 weeks) for a current student to intern in Special Collections.

Literature Review



Survey Results

Overall and Career

Satisfaction with internship
Very satisfied (86.7%) or Satisfied (13.3%)

How much the internship positively impacted decision to pursue a career in libraries, archives, museums, or a related field
Very much (68.6%) or Quite a bit (22.9%)

How much the internship positively impacted career
Very much (55.8%) or Quite a bit (34.9%)

Current Position

How much the internship helped to obtain first professional position in libraries, archives, museums, or a related field
Very much (48.4%) or Quite a bit (22.6%)

How often intern draws upon the skills learned during the internship(s)
Very often (47.7%) or Often (29.5%)

Graduate Education

How much internship positively impacted acceptance to a graduate program
Very much (54.8%) or Quite a bit (25.8%)

As a previous library intern, what do you especially value about your internship experience at Musselman Library?

The poster and full bibliography are available on Gettysburg's IR at:
http://cupola.gettysburg.edu/librarypubs/53

ASSESSMENT in Action — ACRL

This project is part of the program "Assessment in Action: Academic Libraries and Student Success" which is undertaken by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) in partnership with the Association for Institutional Research and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities. The program, a cornerstone of ACRL's Value of Academic Libraries initiative, is made possible by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

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Timeline

- **Aug. - Sept. 2015**: Identify research questions; Develop outcomes and criteria; Identify previous interns
- **Oct. - Dec.**: Design survey and interview schedule
- **January 2016**: Complete IRB application
- **February**: Receive IRB exemption
- **March**: Administer survey
- **April**: Analyze survey results; Conduct and transcribe interviews
- **May - June**: Code and analyze interviews; Communicate final results across library and campus

Research Question

What impact does completing an undergraduate library internship have on:

- Preparation and success in graduate or other advanced training,
- Career and professional goals,
- Early professional employment and success?

Method

Online Survey

- 29 items
- Skip logic applied
- Open for 3 weeks
- Sent to 83 previous interns via email and mail
- Received 45 complete responses (54.2%)

Interviews

- Conducted 6 semi-structured interviews
- Subjects represented a range of graduation years, current professions, and internship types
- Schedule included 6 questions about overall experience, impact on graduate school and early career, and skills acquired.

Interview Results

Having a Personalized Experience

"I felt like I was a part of the library, and I felt like I was part of the staff."

"[The internship] allowed me to learn a lot of the software, the techniques, and the tools that are used in libraries."

Confirming Career Choice

"I was using the internship to step into the profession [and] it did really help me solidify my decision to [pursue] this career."

"I got to play around in all the different departments and figure out what I wanted to do…that really helped me decide…."

"I was considering going to grad school to get my MLS anyway, and then I took the internship…and that really solidified my desire to be a librarian."

Seeing the Big Picture

"I got to learn so much in each different department and everybody there—the staff, the librarians, were so encouraging in letting me explore and learn new things and try new things."

Acquiring Skills

"The work at the reference desk really helped me to understand how to research things in a systematic and efficient way."

"A lot of the communication skills I learned from doing reference interviews really help when I'm trying to talk to patrons…."

"A lot of the little tips and tricks I learned when I was searching for things in reference are helping me search for things at my [current] job, too."

Being Prepared for Graduate School

"I really feel like having done the internship I was a lot more prepared for graduate school."

"Because I got all of [those] different experiences as an undergraduate, I was really able to hone in on what it is I wanted to do as a professional librarian."

"I already had a really good foundation of knowledge when I started grad school that a lot of my peers didn't have…."

Mean Response Comparisons on Post-graduate Outcomes

Survey Question	Internship Type		Internship Area	
	Non-Holley	Holley	Only One Dept.	More than One Dept.
How much did your internship(s) help you to identify possible areas of specialization in libraries, archives or museums that matched your work-related interests?*	3.35	3.75	---	---
How often in your current position do you draw upon the skills you learned during your internship(s)?**	3.10	3.62	3.07	3.56
How much did your internship(s) prepare you for your graduate coursework?*	3.10	3.82	3.00	3.85
How much did your internship(s) help you to obtain your graduate student position or graduate practicum/ internship in libraries, archives, museums, or related fields?*	---	---	2.71	3.55
Overall, how much has your internship positively impacted your career? *	3.27	3.85	3.22	3.81
Overall, how satisfied were you with your internship(s) at Musselman Library?***	3.81	4.00	---	---

* Rating scale: 1 (Very little), 2 (Some), 3 (Quite a bit), 4 (Very much)
** Rating Scale: 1 (Never), 2 (Sometimes), 3 (Often), 4 (Very often)
*** Rate Scale: 1 (Very dissatisfied), 2 (Dissatisfied), 3 (Satisfied), 4 (Very satisfied)
Note: '---' denotes the difference between the two groups is not statistically significant.

Conclusions and Next Steps

Conclusions

- The length of an internship experience and interning in several areas of a library have a significant impact on interns' outcomes.
- Interns find value in their internship through the experience they receive, the opportunity to explore a career, mentorship, and the initiation into the profession as a colleague.
- Previous interns connect their internship experience with their acceptance to a graduate program and their overall preparedness for LIS graduate coursework.
- Internships positively impact the decision to pursue a career in LIS and helps interns to obtain their first professional position.

Next Steps

- Ensure library internships are designed to support best practices identified by previous interns (being paid, being valued as a colleague, working in multiple areas, tailoring the internship to personal interests and goals, feeling ownership over their work, etc.)
- Share results and connect with campus colleagues who support interns in other areas (Center for Public Service, Civil War Institute, Career Development, and others.)

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