

Internships for Museum Studies Students

I. Your Interests

What are the most important factors influencing your internship choice?

Some things to consider:

1. An area of museum work in which you want to concentrate (administration, collections, education, etc.)
2. A topic you are interested in (particular collection or subject)
3. A specific person you are interested in working with
4. A specific place (either a particular city, region, or museum)

II. Four Components of a Successful Internship

In order to have a successful internship, these four components must be met.

1. Mentor (Crucial)

- Your mentor should be: responsive, knowledgeable, and willing to give you their time.

2. Benefits the Institution

- Your work makes a meaningful contribution to the institution.
- Your work should not be 'busywork'.
- The institution should utilize your skills and talents while providing a challenging environment where you can learn. (Not work they could just give to anyone.)

3. Good For You

- You should work on a project by yourself or with a group which you would be able to then put on your resume (sum up in 2 sentences, "I accomplished...").
- A project that has closure and definable characteristics.

4. The Big Picture

- You must be able to grasp where your work environment fits into the larger picture of the institution.
- You might attend meetings, be a part of planning, offer to take notes. Take advantage of every opportunity.

III. Product of Your Internship

1. Internship Portfolio

- Your internship portfolio contains everything that you pick up or comes your way that might fit in a binder(s).
- Examples: Policies, Brochures, Pictures, Paperwork, anything you write, physical models of things (can become basis for work in the future). Good ideas, bad ideas.

2. Journal

- Ideally your journal will consist of daily entries.
- In the past they have been informative, emotional, reflective.
- You should take the last 20 minutes of your workday to write an entry in your journal (consider this part of your work).

3. Short Paper (5 Pages)

- You will pull together what you got out of the internship and

what the institution got from you being there.

4. Letter from the Institution

- A letter of completion from your mentor confirming that you have completed the work requirements for your internship. (e.g. 8 weeks at 40 hours a week or 320 hours)

IV. Networking

The process of setting up the internship can be different in each case. In some instances, the application is completed almost entirely by the student. In others, museum studies faculty and others in SHESC may have connections at particular institutions. It is a good idea to have an idea of what your interests are and some possibilities (prioritized) when you choose to speak to them about it.

V. Internship Agreement (attached at the end of this document)

1. Internships are formalized with an Internship Agreement that specifies the dates, the duties, and the relationships, and the supervision that will guide the internship.
2. Institutions with formal internship procedures can use their own forms as a substitute for our program's form as long as the basic issues of duties and supervision are addressed.

VI. Miscellaneous

- Internships are not limited to museums in the United States.
- Some applications are due in January or February – apply early!
- You may be involved in different projects during your internship, but the necessary components still apply.
- The website for internships at the Smithsonian Institution is:

<http://www.si.edu/ofg/intern.htm>

If you are considering applying to one of the Smithsonian Institutions, you should try and find a specific person you are interested in working with. Applications are usually due early. They also provide minority internships.