

# Chapter 2: Getting Ready

Now that you know a little more about what internships are and how they might benefit your library, it's time to assess whether your library is ready for them. This section of the toolkit will walk you through the process of determining readiness for engaging interns as well as facilitating internal buy-in for internships and tools for brainstorming appropriate intern projects and roles. While many of these tools are designed for libraries considering hosting interns for the first time, they can also be useful questions for libraries already hosting interns to ask as part of an internal reflection and review process.

## Internship Management Checklist<sup>1</sup>

- Assess your library's readiness for interns*
- Make the case for your library to host interns*

## Assessing Your Library's Readiness

There are a few things you will need to consider before deciding to host interns, ranging from issues of organizational culture and resources to risk assessment and potential projects and roles. To begin this process, consider asking yourself and your staff peers the following types of questions (You'll also find this list of questions as a checklist in the appendix):

- Has your library hosted interns in the past?
  - If so, was it successful? How did you measure this success? What lessons were learned? Why did the internship program stop?
  - If your library has not hosted interns, why not?
- How might interns further the mission and work of your library?
  - How might your library benefit from hosting interns?
  - How will interns benefit from joining your library team?
- What risks might exist for engaging interns?
  - What potential problems might you foresee?
  - What risks might exist for the intern? The library? The public?
  - How might you prepare for and/or avoid these risks (training, supervision, insurance or liability coverage, etc.)?
- Is your library's organizational culture amenable to hosting interns?
  - For example, is it a politically charged environment? One that welcomes new team members?
- How might you specifically engage interns at your library?
  - What types of projects, tasks, and roles might they take on?

1. Tasks in italics are those that you may only need to do when you are first setting up your internship program (although you should certainly plan to revisit these tasks at least once per year to confirm that they are still relevant).

- What ongoing tasks and projects can be handed off to interns?
  - What new tasks and projects can an intern potentially take on?
  - Can any of these be done remotely via the Internet?
- What specific skills or knowledge will they need to succeed in these roles?
- Would these be part-time roles? Full-time roles?
- How might they differ from current volunteers? Staff?
- Does your library have appropriate capacity to host interns?
  - Will staff be available to provide guidance and support to interns?
    - Who will be responsible for each step of the process: finding interns, interviewing/selection, orientation and training, management and supervision, evaluation, etc.?
  - Do you have a place for interns to work? The tools required to succeed: a desk, computer, etc.?
  - What if any fiscal resources are available for the internship program?
  - Are you willing to help interns find housing if they are coming in from out of town (for example, a summer internship)?
  - How many interns can we reasonably support?
    - Will these be part-time, full-time, or a mix of both?
- What if any experience does your fellow staff have with interns?
  - Have they ever worked with and/or supervised interns?
  - Are they comfortable collaborating with interns?
  - What types of projects, roles, or tasks do they think might be appropriate for interns?
    - What ongoing tasks and projects can be handed off to interns?
    - What new tasks and projects can an intern potentially take on?
  - What kind of support/training would they like or need to be prepared for working with and/or supervising interns?

Exploring answers to these questions will help you and your library start to consider whether you are ready to start seeking interns to join your team. Don't worry though if you don't have clear answers to all of these questions; in fact, many of your responses may be ambiguous or simply "I don't know." The important thing is that you're beginning to consider the possibilities and getting ready to discover what's possible.

## Making the Case Internally

One of the purposes of this guide is to help move you from ambiguity to clarity about the possibility of hosting an intern and then allowing that to happen with the greatest of ease and opportunities for success. Once you

### Considering Time Costs

In addition to financial resources that might be needed to effectively find and host interns, you'll also need to budget for some real time costs. Unfortunately, a fair amount of time will need to go into such things as assessing and developing your internship program. However, once this has been developed, the amount of time required to find, select, orient, train, and supervise interns is likely to pale in comparison to the quantity – and quality – of time you'll receive from your investment – namely the hands-on assistance of a skilled library intern.

have reviewed the questions in the previous section, you can then begin to make the case for interns to yourself, your peers, and decision-makers at your library.

You've also already begun the process of identifying what fellow staff members might need to be best prepared for working with as well as potentially supervising future interns. This may range from informal training – for example, a frank discussion about how to best partner with interns or a walkthrough of best practices for managing interns (see Chapter 8) – to having a voice in what kinds of projects interns will do during their time with the library.

Continue to Chapter 3 to learn more about how you might structure your internship program, including designing internship projects and roles, determining staffing needs, and crafting a vision and goals for your library's program. ●

### **About this book**

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