

Chapter 4: Finding Interns

Once you have a basic internship program infrastructure in place, you are ready to begin finding appropriate interns for your available projects and roles. This chapter of the toolkit will cover some of the steps and strategies for ensuring a deep pool of applicants from which to select the best candidate for your position.

Who is Your Audience?

Before you begin doing any kind of recruitment for potential interns, it is important that you consider who your primary audience is. For example, if the internship position in question is one that requires applicants to already have an informed understanding of library and library environments, you'll likely want to target your recruitment efforts to students in library science programs.

However, if you are seeking someone with a strong technology background, your ideal intern could also come from other undergraduate or graduate programs (for example, computer science) or even a skilled professional seeking to do an internship as part of career transition or exploration.

Here are a few additional audiences you might recruit from outside of an academic library sciences setting, depending on the nature of the roles that need to be filled:

- **Educators:** From ESL to reading skills to citizenship classes, interns with skills and experience in education can be engaged in the planning, design, and delivery of information in classroom and tutorial experiences. Interns with education backgrounds can also not only deliver educational services but improve on existing programs, codify delivery methods, and document new approaches and resources for future use.
- **Social Justice:** Given many libraries' roles in programs such as those serving incarcerated communities, direct experiential work with prisoners could appeal to a range of social justice professionals with backgrounds in such areas as social work, political science, law, and criminal justice. These professionals might also be interested in working to improve and build upon programs serving other marginalized populations such as local immigrant communities.
- **Creative and Performing Arts:** Singers, storytellers, performers, and other professionals in the arts are a natural audience for interning in the myriad of year-round performance opportunities at the library. Photographers and videographers can help to capture stories within the library as well as add to

Internship Management Checklist¹

- Determine your audience for recruiting potential interns
- Decide if you will seek interns year-round or during specific recruitment windows*
- Identify where you will advertise for interns
- Craft recruitment messages and/or materials
- Consider developing a partnership with a university or college*

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).

and develop new mediums for community learning such as podcasts, online videos, and webisodes.

- **Liberal Arts:** Looking to develop a new program or community event that links literature and learning or reading and local history? Historians, English majors, anthropologists, sociologists, and other students and professionals in liberal arts can be natural fits for many internship opportunities within library environments. Many liberal arts students are also expected to be strong writers, a skill that comes in handy for a myriad of tasks and responsibilities

Keep in mind that the right intern for the role may not be a student currently enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate program. Many young, mid-career, and even retired professionals seek out internships as an opportunity to explore or transition into a new or encore career. In addition, if your library is located in a remote community and/or is far from the closest university, you may have better luck recruiting interns from the local community than just from university programs.

To get started, take a look at each of the internship position descriptions that you crafted in Chapter 3 and ask yourself the following questions:

1. Who is the ideal candidate for this internship? For example, what skills, education, or experience should they have?
2. Where might I find these candidates? Consider whether they might be a currently enrolled student (undergraduate or graduate, library sciences or other academic program) or a lifelong learner (recent graduates, young professionals, mid-career professionals, retirees)?

Internships or Skilled Volunteer Roles?

As discussed in Chapter 1, there are some key differences between an internship and a skilled volunteer position. For example, internships are more likely to have a finite start and end date, be structured around the completion of a particular project, and – most importantly – to be inextricably linked to the intern’s learning objectives. While you should, where appropriate, consider recruiting candidates from outside academic environments – again, there are many skilled non-students who can successfully fulfill your internship’s requirements – you might also want to meet with whomever is responsible for engaging volunteers at your library to determine which projects might be better structured as a skilled volunteer role and which are better suited for a formal internship. For additional details on how interns differ from skilled volunteers, please see the table in Chapter 1.

Recruiting Periods

Before you determine how you want to recruit potential interns, you’ll want to consider when you will seek and/or accept applications for new internships. Many libraries currently seek and accept interns on a year-round, often ad hoc basis. This may be the best system for your library as it provides flexibility for you to create, recruit, and host interns as needed throughout the year.

However, some libraries might want to consider instead creating a pre-determined recruitment window within which they accept and recruit internships; this is especially the case for libraries that currently receive many applications from interested interns throughout the year and/or have a very small staff for internship program management. Some additional reasons for choosing this methodology might include limiting the influx of applications to one application deadline (thus potentially providing staff with one pool of applicants from which to choose the most appropriate candidates), conducting internship recruitment/screening/ training/etc. to one or few periods or sessions as

needed (as opposed to it being an ongoing task), and offering staff an annual process for which they can brainstorm new potential projects and roles for incoming interns.

So what might this look like? For a library operating a Summer internship program, the planning process (while ideally going on throughout the year) might look something like this:

- January/February: Complete internal needs assessment to determine roles and projects for incoming interns
- March: Develop position descriptions + begin recruitment
- April: Complete recruitment + screen/interview applicants
- May/June: Internship(s) begin, including training + orientation
- July: Internships ongoing
- August/September: Internships completed + evaluated
- October/November/December: Make improvements to internship program per evaluations

If your library decides to limit internships to a pre-determined recruitment window, you may first want to confer with local universities to determine the most appropriate window to choose. For example, if students in the closest library sciences program generally complete their internships during Spring term or semester, then it may make the most sense for your library to do the same. However, don't feel that you need to design your internship program around the university's schedule. While doing so may provide you with the largest pool of applicants, the internship timeline should first and foremost be the best fit for your library's needs.

Where should I look?

Once you have an idea for the who and when of recruitment, you'll be ready for the where. Here are three general strategies for internship recruitment to consider (a quick note: consider meeting and/or partnering with any staff or volunteers responsible for library volunteer recruitment before beginning your recruitment process as they can likely assist with what recruitment language and locations have been effective for finding volunteers from the community.)

When determining the amount of time and energy to put into recruitment, bear in mind that, while online recruitment can reach a wide audience, it may not be as effective in targeting candidates with very specific skill sets. However, if you are specific about what you are seeking in your outreach language, as well as thoughtful about where you post your message, chances are good that it will find its way to many qualified candidates.

Online and Print Outreach

If you plan to post your internship position in and on online and print sources, you'll need to first craft a recruitment message. Keep this message brief but informative (you can always direct them to the full position description for more information) as well

as ideally eye-catching. Focus on telling them what the internship is, the specifics of the role (paid vs. unpaid, length of internship, title, and some key responsibilities or deliverables) as well as how this internship will benefit them and the library. Again, consider meeting with those who do volunteer recruitment for your library to discuss what types of language have been effective for recruiting library volunteers from the community as well as which venues are the most successful for attracting talent. You might also meet with contacts at local colleges and universities to discuss effective strategies for best connecting with potential student applicants.

If you plan to do your recruitment face-to-face, use your recruitment message to craft a few key talking points. If you only had 30 seconds to tell someone about internships at your library, what would you say?

Once you have recruitment message and speaking points ready to go, here are a few places to consider getting the word out:

- Local or regional colleges, universities, and community colleges:
 - Library science departments and/or listservs (MLIS, GSLIS, etc.)
 - Other appropriate departments and/or listservs (for example, computer science for technology-focused internships)
 - Campus internship coordinators (if applicable)
 - Career services offices
 - Alumni associations
 - Campus newspapers
 - Libraries
 - Internship fairs, career fairs, open house events, etc.
- Engagement organizations and websites:
 - Local volunteer centers
 - Local service clubs and business associations
 - Websites like Idealist.org, VolunteerMatch, or Craigslist
- Community programs and networks:
 - County, city, state, and other government websites
 - Job networking groups
 - Job placement/training programs and services
 - Faith groups
- Professional events like career and job fairs
- Community events like literary festivals, author readings, sports events, and home improvement expos

Sample Recruitment Message

“Do you love libraries? Are you interested in developing or exploring a library career? We are seeking a motivated, skilled, and enthusiastic individual to join the [Name of Library] team as a Marketing and Communications Intern this summer. This unpaid internship will offer a unique opportunity to develop new outreach materials for our diverse audiences as well as guide staff and volunteers in exploring the latest social media and other communications mediums - all while helping to get the word out on library programs and services in our community. To learn more about this position, including responsibilities, time commitment, and application procedures, please visit our website at [web address].”

- Local newspaper or other job boards (online and print)
- Professional networks:
 - Retired professionals
 - Nonprofit or public professionals
- Library-specific networks:
 - Friends of the Library, Library Foundation, advisory boards, other
- Don't forget your library's website!

Overall, your goal should be to seek as broad a pool of diverse, qualified applicants as possible, so choose your medium strategically and then start getting the word out!

Finally, be sure to engage current staff and volunteers in the recruitment process. Where do they volunteer, learn, connect, worship? Ask them to help spread the word to others and benefit from their long-term relationships throughout the community

Developing Academic Partnerships

Given the focus on experiential learning outcomes for interns, partnerships with academic institutions can often serve as one of the most fruitful bridges to qualified intern candidates. It is therefore not a coincidence that many traditional internship models focus on building and maintaining partnerships with academic institutions.

Your first step here is to identify what local or regional colleges, universities, and/or community colleges could be ideal partners for your library internship program. Start with geography but don't rule out those programs that might be farther away; indeed, many universities with MLIS/GSLIS programs actively seek partnerships with libraries around the region, country, or even world who are able to provide high quality internships for their students.

When considering academic partnerships, consider connecting both with relevant departments (for example, library sciences) and with any existing career services department, campus internship coordinators, or other service learning departments in the institution. According to the "Employer's Guide to Building a Quality Internship Program" by UNLV Career Services, here are a few things to explore as you consider these potential partnerships:

- What majors/disciplines might be most appropriate for your library's opportunities?
- Per department, major, and discipline, what kinds of responsibilities, roles, and projects can students fill?
- What might best motivate – personally, academically, and professionally – a student from a given discipline? What might they seek/gain from an internship with your library?
- Prior to beginning an internship, what courses, skills, and experiences would be

Stay Connected with Former Interns

Don't forget to seek and incorporate former interns into your recruitment process. For example, if you are recruiting at a community job fair, can one or two former interns join you there? Are former interns available to speak about their experience at your library to potential student interns in their own university programs – perhaps as part of a university event or at the start of a relevant class period? Consider how you might engage former interns as ambassadors and partners in recruitment of the next class of interns.

most helpful for an intern to complete?

- What other types of service learning opportunities does the university or college offer? For example, do they offer credit for summer internships in other cities or states? Do they promote and highlight these opportunities?
- What specific learning objectives should the library plan to provide for these interns? Are there existing university or college requirements for intern experiential learning?

Be prepared that partnering with a university or college may mean that you will need to adhere to university or college-specific requirements or program deliverables; these might include completing and filing specific paperwork and forms for the intern, providing a specific type or amount of professional development training to the intern, or perhaps even using the university or college's own evaluation materials at the end of the student's term. While for some libraries, these requirements are not at all a burden – and in fact may even be a blessing given that they provide pre-designed infrastructure and forms such as applications and evaluations – for others they may be an unwelcome set of rules to follow. Discuss what if any requirements your potential university or college partner might have before deciding to work with them for the long-term. ●

Managing Incoming Applications

You might consider creating (or asking your library's technical team to create) an email address just for accepting internship applications. You should also craft a short auto-reply message that thanks them for their application, letting them know that you will get back to them within a certain number of days – or by a certain date – with next steps. Finally, consider crafting acceptance and rejection responses for applicants; these can be built from existing human resources or volunteer letters. For examples of these notes and auto-reply text, see the Appendix.

About this book

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