

Chapter 6: Training Interns

Once you have selected your intern candidate, you're ready to begin the training process, beginning with orientation. This should take place on the first day of the internship with the goal of providing the new intern with a broad snapshot of the library, its programs, and internal systems.

Orientation

Orientation can serve as a formal group session presented by you and/or other staff to a group of more than one incoming interns. However, it can also be a one-on-one discussion of information and facts. Either way, there are some core components that should be incorporated into any orientation, including the following (please note that a checklist of these components can be found in the appendix section of this toolkit):

- A brief introduction to the history and mission of the library;
- An overview of the library's structure, from broader staff hierarchies to (if relevant) how it fits into a larger organizational system such as city government, county government, or a university;
- An overview of the library's current educational and community programs and services, including copies of any relevant materials such as newsletters or program guides;
- A mental – or even physical – map of the library and neighboring community, including information on where their work station is, where the bathrooms are, where they can take breaks, and good places to grab a bite to eat;
- Library policies and procedures, including risk management strategies –
- Including what to do (and who to call) in case of emergency – and how to best represent the library to members of the public and/or media;
- Any internal jargon or acronyms that they might want or need to learn;
- Dress and behavior expectations of library team members;

Be certain to help them get settled into their new workstation, as well including securing any supplies or resources they might need – from a desk lamp to an email address (as well as how to login and who to ask if they run into technical questions).

Internship Management Checklist¹

- Develop an in-person or online orientation for incoming interns*
- Provide orientation to new interns
- Discuss and review internship expectations, goals, and deliverables
- Develop and/or find relevant trainings for new interns*
- Facilitate training of new interns
- Consider offering training to staff internally

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).

You should also send a welcome announcement out to all staff and volunteers, announcing the intern's arrival to the team. Similarly, whenever possible, walk the intern around the library on their first day to help familiarize them with their new work environment as well as introduce them to current staff and volunteers, especially library leadership and those with whom the intern will be working on a regular basis. This will help to make the interns feel welcome as well as to begin placing faces with names, while also making staff aware that the intern has *officially* joined the team. In short, your role in this process is to help facilitate the beginning of their professional relationship with others in the library.

Online Orientation

While orientation should ideally take place face-to-face, you can also offer orientation via the Internet for interns who might be completing their internship with your library online. For example, you might use a free video conferencing service like Skype as well as share documents in advance with them via email.

One more important thing to do as part of their first day orientation is to set the tone for the internship by having an honest discussion about expectations and project specifics. This can include such things as:

- Personal and professional expectations of the intern;
- Goals and expectations of the library and supervisor;
- College and/or university expectations or requirements (if relevant);
- Experiential learning and professional development options and objectives (see Chapter 7);
- Work styles and mutually agreed-upon communications, supervision, and feedback methods (see Chapter 8);
- Project goals, objectives, timeline, and deliverables.

Establishing Expectations

See the appendix section of this toolkit for a list of suggestions for establishing great (yet realistic) intern and library expectations from day one. You'll find a template for creating internship agreements there as well.

Note that all of this should already have been discussed during the internship recruitment and selection processes – for example, as part of the internship position description and internship agreement paperwork – so it shouldn't be the first time the conversation is had. However, revisiting these topics will help to establish a collaborative tone for the internship from the very first day.

Training

Where orientation is often a global picture of the library and the role of interns within it, training should focus more specifically on the tools, systems, and skills required for the intern to succeed in their role. In short, training covers the nuts and bolts of what the intern will do in the course of their internship project or role.

In addition to project/role-specific trainings – for example, going over the basics of doing collection develop-

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Looking for introductory trainings on customer service, intellectual freedom, reference interviews, youth programs, or project planning? As part of the development of this toolkit, we have also created web-based trainings on these very topics. To review as well as potentially offer these trainings to your future interns, please visit the Multnomah County Library website at <http://libraryinterns.blogspot.com>.

ment or assisting with references – there are also a few universal library subjects that you might want to cover via trainings for your interns; these can include:

- Communications and community outreach
- Customer service basics
- Intellectual freedom
- Open Access / Access to information
- Project/Program design, development, and management
- Serving vulnerable populations
- Serving youth

For a printable list of these training topics, please see the appendix section of this toolkit.

For those trainings that you might be developing for the first time, keep in mind that your students may know a bit about the topic – for example, collection development and management – but may not yet have hands-on experience doing the task. As explained by Messiah College and the Technology Council of Central Pennsylvania in their guide “Starting and Maintaining a Quality Internship Program”: “Many students are unfamiliar with the activities, environment and objectives of [library environments]. Even though your interns may have worked part-time to support their education, these experiences may not have exposed them to organizational politics, the need for confidentiality, the importance of teamwork, or the orientation of an organization. It is this orientation and training dimension of the internship experience that emphasizes the partnership role of the [host library].”

Training Staff

You might consider offering internal training for fellow staff members on how to best partner with interns. For example, how might they share their expertise with an intern? This training can also be a good time to go over the definition of the internship – what an intern will and won’t do and how they differ from volunteers and staff, who is their supervisor, who the staff person should talk to if they have ideas or concerns for or about the internship, etc. – as well as appropriate behavior and boundaries between staff and interns. In short, help staff understand more clearly the role and activities of the intern as well as how they can make the most of this partnership opportunity.

Also, keep in mind that while training should always be offered at the start of an internship, interns should have access to ongoing training and/or supervision as needed throughout their term of service. We will explore this in great depth in the next chapter.

Looking for examples of orientation-training models? Consider checking out some of those highlighted in “Public Library Internships: Advice from the Field,” edited by Cindy Mediavilla (Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2006). ●

About this book

Looking for more info about this book? Visit <http://libraryinterns.blogspot.com>, where you can download individual chapters or the entire book, and find other related resources (all free of charge).