

Law Library Internship FAQ –May, 2013

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What are the benefits of an internship?

Law Library interns can benefit from an internship by:

- Acquiring skills and experience for use in future employment;
- Gaining practical experience for their resume;
- Earning valuable references;
- Networking with other professionals in the field;
- Earning a financial benefit, either through a stipend or academic credit.

Law libraries that host an intern can benefit by:

- Gaining the work product of the intern;
- Giving existing staff the opportunity to mentor the intern;
- Learning new and creative ideas from the intern to apply to existing library work and procedures.

What should be expected from an internship?

The mutual exchange of benefits will only work if professionalism and respect exists between the host and the intern.

An intern is expected to:

- Treat the internship as a place of employment and follow all rules and policies of the host;
- Arrive on time and dress appropriately;
- Perform all work assignments in a professional manner and to the highest possible standards.

The host is expected to:

- Take responsibility for its role as educator of the intern by providing training and supervision;
- Provide the intern with an array of experience within the work of the law librarians at their institution;

- Be aware of the intern's academic demands and provide flexibility in scheduling.

How do I find an internship placement or find an intern?

If you're a library student looking for an internship:

- Check with your library school for internship listings;
- Look at LLAGNY's website (<http://www.aallnet.org/chapter/llagny/Internships.html>) for possible internship listings;
- Don't wait for a listing to appear! Call a law firm, public law library or an academic law library and ask if the institution will host an intern.

If you're a law library with a special project or a need for extra hands:

- Write a description of the internship and outline your exact needs and preferences;
- Contact library schools and ask them to post the internship on their listserv;
- Post the internship listing with LLAGNY @ <http://www.aallnet.org/chapter/llagny/Internships.html>.

What kind of tasks can an intern be expected to do?

Certain tasks can be expected to be done at any law library. These tasks include:

- Answering reference questions;
- Participating in training sessions;
- Weeding, shelf reading, and shelf shifting.

Other tasks may be specific to a particular law library environment. For example:

- Academic law librarian interns may work on the law school's digital archive or prepare a Lib Guide;
- Public law librarian interns may work on research guides on common legal questions for members of the public;
- Firm law librarian interns may conduct research for the firm's knowledge management or competitive intelligence database.

If you need more ideas, take a look at the job description for an entry-level law librarian at the host institution to find tasks for the intern to accomplish.

How should the host and the intern plan for the internship?

Step One: Conduct an interview

Prior to beginning the internship, all interns should be interviewed by the host's intern supervisor. This is more than a formality. Like anyone coming to work at the institution, the supervisor must make sure the expectations for scheduling and assignments are a mutually good fit.

At the interview, the intern and the host should agree on the following issues:

- A schedule that ensures there is a staff member available to supervise and train the intern during their work hours;
- A schedule that, if applicable, allows a student to complete the requisite hours within the time allotted to the internship;
 - Generally, over the course of a semester, a one credit internship requires 40 hours of work, two credit internships require 80 hours of work, and three credit internships require 120 hours of work. This requirement varies by library school.
- A list of projects or tasks that the intern will be expected to complete over the course of the internship;
- An understanding of the skill level at which the intern can perform, and how the intern expects to grow his or her skill set over the internship.

Step Two: Establish an internship agreement

If the internship is for credit: The intern's library school will have forms that are required to be filled out by the host. These forms are often called an "Internship Agreement" or a "Learning Contract". This written agreement will generally require a detailed description of the agreed-upon tasks or assignments discussed during the interview with the intern. The hours the intern will work and the duration of the internship are usually also included in the agreement. The supervisor of the intern at the hosting institution should read this carefully and review it with the intern prior to the start of the internship.

If an internship is not for credit: The intern and the host still need to agree on: 1) the length of the internship (beginning and ending date); 2) the hours of the internship; and 3) the projects and tasks the intern will be assigned. It is good to be as specific as possible, so both the host and the intern are aware of what is expected and will make the internship more effective. Likewise, these items should be put in writing, even if done through e-mail, so both parties know what is to be expected.