

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
January 23 – 26, 2014
Chicago, Illinois**

**Standards Committee: “Best Practices for Internships
as a Component of Graduate Archival Education”**

(Prepared by Co-Chairs Lisa Miller and Dan Santamaria)

“Best Practices for Internships as a Component of Graduate Archival Education” was prepared by several SAA Council members following member feedback from the 2013 Annual Meeting and a Council discussion (September 2013). The Council agreed that there were potential benefits in providing SAA members with a set of guidelines or best practices for developing professional internships for graduate students.

BACKGROUND

Professional internships allow graduate students to gain new insights into the nature of archival practice by engaging in meaningful work under the mentorship of experienced and knowledgeable archives professionals. Internships play a unique role in the profession, with many graduate archives programs requiring them as a component for a degree. Although internships are first and foremost intended to educate archives graduate students, internships are partnerships among students, archives programs, and the sites hosting interns. Due to the importance that internships play in the development of many SAA members and the profession, providing a "Best Practices" document with guidelines for interns, faculty supervisors, and intern supervisors is well advised.

The following draft was prepared by four SAA Council member-volunteers—Tanya Zanish-Belcher, Geoffrey Huth, Elisabeth Kaplan, and Lisa Mangiafico—following a Council discussion in September 2013 about the potential benefits of providing members with a set of guidelines or best practices for internships as a component of graduate archival education. The Council subgroup sought feedback from a number of SAA component groups with a particular interest in this topic. The draft was also posted on the SAA website as a means of soliciting comments from the broader SAA membership. The document was submitted to the Standards Committee in November 2013 (Appendix A).

Historical Context for the Issue

Issues related to new archives professionals, employment, compensation, and archival education have been widely discussed by SAA members via formal and informal channels during the past several years. In particular, Jackie Dooley’s Presidential address

at the 2013 Annual Meeting was largely devoted to these issues. Responses to the address were numerous, and included an informal response from Council member Michelle Light that focused on the implications of unpaid internships (<http://offtherecord.archivists.org/2013/08/22/internships-privilege-and-saa-a-council-member-responds/>).

DISCUSSION

The Standards Committee recommends that “Best Practices for Internships as a Component of Graduate Archival Education Programs” (Appendix B) be adopted, but with some caveats and additional context for the issues involved. Although discussions about issues related to new archives professionals, the job market, and internships, in particular, have taken place in a variety of online and offline forums in recent years, a number of blog posts from the last two years elucidate many of the most commonly held viewpoints. URLs for several posts are provided below:

- <http://www2.archivists.org/history/leaders/jackie-m-dooley/2013-saa-presidential-address-by-jackie-dooley>
- <http://offtherecord.archivists.org/2013/08/22/internships-privilege-and-saa-a-council-member-responds/>
- <http://archivasaurus.wordpress.com/2013/08/16/professional-privilege-a-response-to-the-2013-saa-presidential-address/>
- <http://newarchivist.com/2011/11/17/free-labor/>
- <http://hacklibschool.wordpress.com/2012/05/18/get-a-job-or-the-ethics-of-library-internships/>
- <http://eatingouryoung.wordpress.com/2012/11/09/advocating-for-archives-without-advocating-for-archivists/>
- <http://offtherecord.archivists.org/2012/11/13/hanging-together/>

Many archivists have expressed strong opinions in both the posts themselves and in comments sections and Twitter discussions related to them. In particular, the use of unpaid internships and volunteer positions within archival repositories has been criticized as devaluing the professional nature of archival work and having a negative impact on efforts to achieve greater diversity within the profession. The issuing of the joint SAA-NARA publication *Resources for Volunteer Programs in Archives* in 2012 was a particular flashpoint for some people holding these views and prompted criticism of SAA among some members.

Although soliciting feedback prior to submitting “Best Practices for Internships as a Component of Graduate Archival Education” for approval was important, given the

charged nature of some of the discussions surrounding these issues it would likely be beneficial for the Council to publish summary information about the feedback received from component groups and members. This information could include:

- * A description of efforts to publicize the comment period,
- * A list of the component groups that offered comments,
- * The total number of comments received,
- * The methods that were used to evaluate the comments, and
- * If possible, any major themes or commonalities among the comments.

Documenting these efforts would be a good faith effort at making this work fully transparent to members and would address section III.B.3. of the Standards Committee's *Procedures for Review and Approval of an SAA-Developed Standard*.

The package submitted to the Standards Committee also does not address section III.B.4. Maintenance and Review Plan. We suggest that the Council consider a review cycle for this best practices document of 3 to 5 years.

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT “Best Practices for Internships as a Component of Graduate Archival Education” (Appendix B) be adopted;

THAT additional information on the solicitation of comments and responses to “Best Practices for Internships as a Component of Graduate Archival Education” be made available with the document for the purpose of providing context; and

THAT the Council set a review period for “Best Practices for Internships as a Component of Graduate Archival Education” of between 3 and 5 years.

Support Statement: “Best Practices for Internships as a Component of Graduate Archival Education” provides basic guidance for graduate students, archival educators, and internship supervisors on the nature of work involved with internships, communication, evaluation, and compensation, and should assist all parties in approaching internships with similar expectations.

Relation to Strategic Plan: “Best Practices for Internships as a Component of Graduate Archival Education” assists in achieving portions of all four of SAA's Goals as stated in the 2013-2018 Strategic Plan, including "advocating for archivists," "enhancing professional growth," "advancing the field," and, because the guidelines were developed in response to member comment, "meeting members' needs." Specifically, the document addresses Goal 1 (Advocating for Archives and Archivists) by stating clearly that, “Interns do not replace professional staff”; Strategy 2.3. (“Support the career development of members to assist them in achieving their goals”); and Strategy 3.1. (“Identify the need for new standards, guidelines, and best practices and lead or participate in their development”).

Issues of privilege have been prominent in the discussions noted in the Discussion, particularly the realization that in most cases people from certain socio-economic backgrounds cannot afford to participate in unpaid internships. The statement that interns "should receive compensation (in the form of academic credit or a stipend) for their work commensurate with the qualifications required for the position" is a step toward addressing Strategy 4.3 ("Continue to enrich the association and the profession with greater diversity in membership....").

Fiscal Impact: None.

Proposal for Best Practices Approval

Submitted on Wednesday, November 27, 2013 - 12:01pm

Submitted by user: Zanis1813

Submitted values are:

Proposal type: Development of a new SAA standard

--Contact Information--

Name of submitting group: SAA Council

Date submitted: November 27, 2013

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Title of Standard: Best Practices for Internships as a Component of Graduate Archival Education

Type of Standard: Best Practices

Topic(s): - Administration and Management - Education

Description of Standard:

These Best Practices were prepared by SAA Council members following member feedback from the 2013 annual meeting and a Council discussion (September 2013). Council agreed there were potential benefits for providing SAA members with a set of guidelines or best practices for developing professional internships for graduate students.

Professional internships allow graduate students to gain new insights into the nature of archival practice by engaging in meaningful work under the mentorship of experienced and knowledgeable archives professionals. Although internships are first and foremost intended to educate archives graduate students, internships are partnerships among students, archives programs, and the sites hosting interns.

The goals are as follows:

1. Provide a basic set of best practices for individual programs/institutions and repositories to utilize in developing their intern policies.

2. Provide guidance for faculty supervisors, interns, and on-site supervisors as they collaborate together on internships
3. Provide recommendations which give details on: the nature of work during an internship; compensation; drafting intern agreements; the roles of those involved; and the evaluation process.

Adopting procedures from the Standards Committee's review process, the SAA Council has sought feedback from a number of SAA component groups with a particular interest in this topic.

Related Standards:

Bastian, Jeannette A. and Donna Webber. Archival Internships: A Guide for Faculty, Supervisors, and Students. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2008.

Society of American Archivists: Guidelines for a Graduate Program in Archival Studies: U.S. Department of Labor. Internship Programs Under The Fair Labor Standards Act. <http://www2.archivists.org/gpas/curriculum> <http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.pdf>

Related organizations for consultation and review:

Roundtables: Archival Educators; Archives Management; Students and New Professionals

Sections: College and University Archives

Entire SAA membership (online comments via the SAA web site)

Projected timetable: This document has been reviewed by selected Roundtables and Sections, and was also made available online to the SAA membership (final deadline of Nov. 22). SAA Council would like to vote on the adoption of these Best Practices at its January 22-24, 2014, meeting.

Budgetary implications: None.

File

attachment: <http://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/webform/Best%20Practices%20for%20Internships%20as%20a%20Component%20of%20Archival%20Graduate%20Education%2011-27-2013.docx>

The results of this submission may be viewed at:

<http://www2.archivists.org/node/15584/submission/14834>

Best Practices for Internships as a Component of Graduate Archival Education¹

Adapted from Best Practices in Public History, Public History Internships. Prepared by the National Council on Public History Curriculum and Training Committee, 2008

BACKGROUND

Professional internships allow graduate students to gain new insights into the nature of archival practice by engaging in meaningful work under the mentorship of experienced and knowledgeable archives professionals. Professional internships provide students with a unique opportunity to connect the skills and knowledge gained in their archives education with practical experience supervised by a professional archivist. For the majority of archives positions available, practical experience is a requirement.

When graduate internships are offered for academic credit, archives internships must be designed with clear educational objectives. Onsite archivist supervisors need to collaborate with teaching faculty to evaluate graduate student interns appropriately and to determine whether students have met the course's educational objectives. Onsite work may be accompanied by additional assignments as required by the faculty supervisor.

Although internships are first and foremost intended to educate archives graduate students, internships are partnerships among students, archives programs, and the sites hosting interns. No two internships will be exactly alike, so it is vital that faculty, students, and onsite staff who supervise interns take the time to discuss the project and to establish clear expectations about what will take place during an internship. It is the responsibility of the academic program to ensure that both students and supervisors at internship sites are well informed about what is expected from a successful internship. Once an internship begins, it is vital for student interns, faculty members, and onsite supervisors to maintain open lines of communication to address any problems that arise. Successful internships balance the needs and goals of all partners.

The Society of American Archivists has defined a set of overarching recommendations common to most good programs, and academic programs can use these to shape internships that meet their unique missions and pedagogical goals. SAA recommends that individual institutions and programs use these best practices, in addition to SAA's *Guidelines for a Graduate Program in Archival Studies*, to develop their own specific policies for internships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Nature of Work: Internships engage graduate students in professional-level work that supplements formal archival education and core knowledge, strengthens or introduces new skills, encourages collaboration and teamwork, and helps to develop their understanding of how archival theories and methods are applied in practice. Such work is performed under the supervision of experienced archives professionals willing to share their knowledge and insights with student interns. An internship must include enough hours to ensure that the intern can complete a project and gain exposure to various aspects of archival management. Interns should also be oriented to institutional operations. Internship projects are designed so

that a student can later refer to his or her discrete role and accomplishment when applying for employment. In many cases, this means that internship projects are designed so that students can produce a complete work product--a digitized or processed collection, a finding aid, or an exhibit--from beginning to end. Alternatively, a project could be designed so that an intern plays a significant role on a group project, such as drafting a preservation plan for a set of maps to be digitized or creating metadata guidelines for an Omeka implementation. Interns should be allowed to use works generated during their internship as part of a portfolio or job application.

Compensation for Student Internships: Given the value of archives work and the skills possessed by archives graduate students, interns should receive compensation (in the form of academic credit or a stipend) for their work commensurate with the qualifications required for the position. Graduate internships without any form of compensation should be rare to avoid devaluing the professional nature of archival work. Institutions that cannot offer compensation will ensure all other recommended best practices are met.

Internship Agreements: Before a professional internship begins, the student intern, the onsite supervisor, and the faculty internship supervisor must agree to a clear set of guidelines for the internship. These specify the conditions of employment, including the educational objectives of the internship, the expected final work product of the internship, and the evaluation criteria that will be used by both the faculty member and the onsite supervisor. This agreement may take the form of informal letters of agreement or a more formal written contract signed by all parties, but the parameters of the internship are in writing and approved by all parties before the internship begins. Archives programs may also find it useful to provide both students and host sites with online or printed information explaining the role of internships within their curriculums and the academic requirements for student internships.

Onsite Supervisors: Interns are supervised at their internship sites by individuals with sufficient training or experience in archives to ensure that interns are exposed to methods and procedures consistent with the best practices in the field. Onsite intern supervisors will meet regularly with interns to answer questions, provide feedback on their work, and mentor them. Intern supervisors and their institutions also have a responsibility to ensure a professional and safe work environment.

Faculty Internship Supervisors: Internships must be supervised by faculty members who are knowledgeable about the field of archives and who can appropriately evaluate all of the components of an internship.

Regular Communication: Regular contact between the intern's faculty supervisor, the intern, and the onsite supervisor must be maintained during the internship. If possible, hosting sites provide student interns with opportunities to share their experiences with others and to reflect on how the internship experience connects to their coursework and issues of archival theory and practice. This can take many forms, including face-to-face meetings or virtual discussions.

Evaluation: All internships include evaluation methods that allow institutions to determine whether students have met the educational objectives of the internship.

Evaluation methods and procedures are clearly defined at the outset of the internship and include written input from onsite supervisors. Interns are given an opportunity to discuss their performance and experiences with both the academic advisor and the onsite supervisor at the end of the internship. After completion of an internship, both students and onsite internship supervisors evaluate the internship experience to identify areas for future improvement. The conclusions of these surveys can be used to enhance future internship experiences and to identify sites that may not be appropriate for hosting future interns.

Interns Do Not Replace Professional Staff: Work performed by interns must be educational and provide students with hands-on experience. The work of interns must not replace the work of professional staff.

Post-Graduate Internships: SAA recognizes some professionals may investigate additional post-graduate internships, in addition to any sponsored by archives graduate programs, and recommends participants receive fair compensation. Institutions should also follow these best practices to the best of their ability.

ⁱ Graduate archival education refers to MA/MLS/MLIS programs, with a minimum number of credit hours dedicated to an archives specialization. SAA Directory of Archival Education: <http://www2.archivists.org/dae>. For additional information, please see:

Bastian, Jeannette A. and Donna Webber. *Archival Internships: A Guide for Faculty, Supervisors, and Students*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2008.

Society of American Archivists: *Guidelines for a Graduate Program in Archival Studies*: <http://www2.archivists.org/gpas/curriculum>

U.S. Department of Labor. *Internship Programs Under The Fair Labor Standards Act*. <http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.pdf>