Review of Culminating Internship

Samantha Shandy

University of Denver

LIS 4910: Culminating Internship

Dr. Mary Stansbury

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I had the exceptional opportunity to fulfill my culminating internship credentials as a digital publishing intern at the Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) Misinformation Review – an academic journal housed within the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. The journal is an open-source, interdisciplinary, scholarly journal focused on all aspects of misinformation. I had the privilege to work as a digital publishing assistant under the guidance of editor-in-chief Natascha Chtena, who tasked me with supporting projects for the journal that closely aligned with my outlined goals and objectives.

This paper will highlight my culminating internship experience, discuss my goals and objectives, go in depth into my work plan and what contributions I made, discuss examples of my observation of theory applied to practice, highlight my strengths and challenges, and conclude with how this internship has helped shape my professional goals.

My primary goal – and a large reason why I selected this internship placement – was to increase my exposure to metadata, and to gain experience with digital repositories. During my interview, we discussed how important an interest in working with metadata was in this role, and how I would be more on the back end of things, rather than working with the public directly. Though I initially intended to find a placement within an academic library, Natascha's keen interest in hiring an intern with a background in library and information science for the sake of producing strong metadata content for the journal is what made me feel confident that this would be a mutually beneficial opportunity.

The three objectives I established in order to meet my primary goal of increasing my exposure to metadata are:

- Create a database for article metadata.

- Complete 20 hours of entering metadata into the Directory of Open Access Journals.

- Complete 20 hours using CrossRef to update metadata.

One of my first projects was to manually enter article metadata into the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). Before doing so, I got the idea to create a database for the article metadata – something I learned from a Digital Libraries course I had taken. In that course, we were tasked as a group to create a digital collection in Omeka. My instructor strongly recommended we create a spreadsheet prior to uploading metadata into Omeka to check for continuity between group members, catch any missing fields, and allow for batch editing as needed. I put this important suggestion into practice during my internship and created an excel spreadsheet for all DOAJ metadata fields. My extra step was commended by my field mentor, and this step leaves me feeling confident that the next intern to take over this document will have a clear template to continue adding to as more articles are published.

Having now completed my first objective, I took to manually entering the metadata for each article published by the HKS Misinformation Review – 76 in total. This was a labor of love, and easily exceeded the 20 hours I pledged, as outlined by my second objective.

The last objective for my primary goal was unfortunately not completed due to time constraints. During down-time, however, I did use it as an opportunity to explore CrossRef and develop at least a basic understanding of its use.

A second goal I created was to gain experience in outreach. Though I do not have a strong interest in the programming side of outreach events currently, I did want to develop my outreach skills in relation to marketing/outreach communications. The two objectives I established in order to meet my second goal of gaining experience in outreach are:

- Create 1 new outreach material for potential peer reviewers.

- Recruit 5 new peer reviewers.

I met both objectives for my second goal. The outreach material I created is a Call for Peer Reviewers and Collaborating Editors (see attachment). This project took about three weeks to complete, which included sending my drafts to Natascha for revisions. Once a final draft was established, I was on to my next objective of recruiting peer reviews/collaborating editors by way of email. Using a database of institutions to reach out to, I began emailing my outreach material and tracking responses. Since my final day as an intern, we had received eight new peer reviewers, and I hope that number has continued to rise since my departure.

My third and final goal was to gain an understanding of the prevalence of misinformation and how it affects the public. This was important to me because it resonated with my interest in reference work/instruction. In many of my graduate courses we discuss the prevalence of misinformation and the importance of combatting it by educating communities on how to spot misinformation and how to unearth reputable information sources. I wanted to put theory to practice by educating myself on misinformation in the academic domain. My two objectives I established in order to meet my third goal of understanding the prevalence of misinformation are:

- Read 10 peer reviewed articles from the Misinformation Review.
- Have 1 meeting with Natascha where we discuss the articles I read and my takeaways.

I completed my first objective during weeks where work was slower and ended up tripling my goal of 10 peer reviewed articles. This was in-part thanks to the articles following the journal's mission of ensuring clarity and impact by keeping articles on the shorter side and limiting academic jargon.

I did not have the opportunity to fulfill my second objective of having a meeting with Natascha to review my thoughts on the articles I had read due to time constraints. Instead, I scheduled a meeting with a reference librarian I met through networking, and we discussed a few of the articles and had an insightful conversation on how misinformation is affecting our daily lives during the pandemic.

A major strength of mine that Natascha pointed out was my focus on organizing information in a way that is user-friendly and long-lasting. She noted that while anyone can make a spreadsheet by absent-mindedly adding information into it, it takes a person with a knowledge of the field to do so in a way that pulls out relevant information and makes the most of the information on hand. I did this by way of organizing and standardizing my information fields, much like one would do when creating templates for entering metadata. This is something I had learned early in the library and information science program. Course instructors underscored the importance of organization and standardization across all types of library and archive-specific careers. I am happy to say my applying this important theory to my internship work was met with praise.

A second strength I was commended for was my quick turnaround time. Since my placement was remote, I set my own hours and in doing so, I made sure to commit the bulk of my weekly time allowance near the beginning of the week, since this is when our meetings were generally scheduled. For smaller side projects, this oftentimes meant that my turnaround time was less than 48 hours from when I was given it. Even though I thought a remote position would be a challenge for me, it turned out to be beneficial because I remained disciplined about my set internship hours.

As I mentioned, the first challenge I faced with this internship was that it was a remote placement. This is not only because I feared the many distractions I would face when working from home, but also because my learning style is very hands-on/kinesthetic and visual, and I would need to adapt to a heavily verbal type of interaction, since the bulk of communication and instruction was via email. My mentor supported me by creating clear pathways for communication and walking through an example when she wanted outcomes to look a certain way. She also gave me an exceptional amount of freedom when spearheading projects, and that level of trust and support helped calm my nerves.

A second challenge I faced with this internship is my own anxiety and experiences with imposter syndrome. I have a habit of doubting my abilities, and yet somehow, I found myself interning for a very prestigious Ivy League school. I was shocked when I was offered a digital publishing assistant internship after my interview, and I think that shock is what fueled me to work diligently and accomplish some of my finest work to date. I owe an abundance of thanks to Natascha as well, as she never ceased from offering me support and exciting opportunities that fulfilled my areas of interest. We continue to stay in touch, and she has even emailed me several digital publishing opportunities she has come across that she believes I am well suited for.

The culminating internship experience has helped me clarify my professional goal of working in the background of libraries, so to speak. My interest in working with metadata has blossomed into first-hand experiences that I can confidently add to my skillset. It has also opened my eyes to professions outside of traditional library settings, such as working in publishing for scholarly journals. Overall, the culminating internship has been an invaluable experience that has prepared me for entering the workforce and has given me some much-needed confidence as an aspiring librarian.