Archival Internships: Exploring the Efficacy

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Do archives internships completed during graduate school correlate with greater career success after graduation?

“Career success” is defined as likelihood to be full-time permanently employed in archives 0-12 years after graduation
• Study grant-funded by Society of American Archivists Foundation in May 2023
  ○ Research participants were paid
  ○ Mixed methods research approach
• Survey of recent graduates in LIS programs conducted July – Aug 2023
  ○ Survey invitation & open-access link distributed on SNAP listserv, SAA Annual Meeting 2023 digital platform, and seven MLIS alumni lists
  ○ We had a spam problem that required data cleanup
  ○ 273 valid responses
• Interviews of 10 select participants completed May 2024 (qualitative analysis ongoing)
STATE OF INTERNSHIPS

n=273

- Majority of survey respondents reported an internship was not required by their graduate program (60.5%, 147)
- Majority of survey respondents completed an internship (71.2%, 173) and of those, a majority:
  - completed internship for credit (67.6%, 117)
  - were not paid for internship (54.9%, 95)
  - found host independently, not through school (51.3%, 59)

Most common work completed during an internship was Arrangement and Description of Physical Records, Physical Preservation Tasks, and Digitization (scanning or metadata creation)
MIXED EVIDENCE
● Students who worked at a job in an archives before AND/OR during their graduate school program were more likely to employed in the field

● Students who completed an internship for credit vs ad-hoc were more likely to still be employed in field
CORRELATIONS WITHOUT STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE

- Students who completed an internship are more likely to still be employed in the field at time of survey
- Students who completed an internship spent less time job hunting
- Students who were paid in their internship are more likely to still be employed in the field
How do we interpret and use this data?
DON’T COUNT OUT INTERNSHIPS YET

- More research is needed!
  - Many correlations without statistical significance indicates something is happening here, but we did not capture it with our sample
- Limitations

- Strong and significant correlation between jobs but not for internships – what makes a student job different (better?) than an internship for future employment?
- What makes a for-credit internship more impactful than an ad-hoc one?
- What is the impact of quality mentorship within or outside of internships?
What do you want a new archivist to know?

Train the profession you want to see!
LOWERING BARRIERS TO INTERNSHIPS

- Move away from volunteer as the default!
- An intern working 180 hours for $15/hr costs you just $2,890 (including taxes)
  - This flat-dollar ask goes down smoother with upper administrators
  - Looking for a grant? Write an internship into it!
  - Library/Archives Friends groups have sponsored interns

- How to make an unpaid internship tolerable:
  - Be flexible! Respect their paid work schedule
  - Free parking
  - Random perks – send them to SAA & other annual meetings or workshops!
  - Offer remote work!
Feed an intern today!

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