

Opportunities for Internships in Library Administration

Results of a Survey Commissioned by the LAMA Education Committee

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Many within the library profession are concerned about a crisis in the profession as a significant number of experienced librarians retire in the next twenty years. This is particularly troubling in the area of library management where the problem is compounded by fewer librarians choosing library administration as a career path.¹ The problem is not only attracting people to the field, but also finding avenues for individuals to gain the skills and experience necessary to become tomorrow's library administrators. How is the next generation of leaders being prepared? What kind of hands-on management experience in librarianship is available? How accessible is this experience?

Background

There has not been very much written about management internships in librarianship.² Perhaps this is indicative of the difficulties associated with the operation of a formal internship program. As discussed in a 1980 article by Nancy E. Gwinn et al., "CLR Academic Library Management Intern Program: A Symposium," the dominant management internship model is based on a Council on Library Resources (CLR) program, which started in 1973. The original program was intended to last one year but was quickly changed to the length of the ten-month academic year to accommodate participants' schedules. It was tailored toward people who were midcareer librarians looking for a way to move up. The goal was to provide individuals, who were committed to a career in administration, the skills and experience necessary for top-level positions in large academic universities.³ A follow-up article was published about the same program in 1992 by Caroline A. Mitchell, "The CLR Academic Library Management Intern Program." By this time the program had experienced a drop in applications and was broadening its scope to include people with a greater variety of backgrounds, who were placed in a wider variety of host libraries.⁴ The program itself remained largely unchanged. Mitchell's article was based on a series of interviews with participants who had completed the internship program. Soon after the article was published, the program was discontinued in favor of leadership institutes.

The CLR program was highly selective and had a rigorous application process. Applicants were expected to be focused and communicate clear, detailed goals in their application. These interns, who worked closely with library directors, were included in upper-level meetings and usually chose to work on a special administrative project. An attempt was made to introduce them to the wide variety of administrative responsibilities, deadlines, and other pressures faced by top managers.

Two additional programs were highlighted in articles published in 1987, both of which were based on the CLR model. Louise S. Sherby, in "The Management Intern Program at the Columbia University Libraries," described a six-month internship that involved interns who were already employees in the host library. They were released from their responsibilities to take part in a management internship. This style of internship placed less stress on the family life of the intern but created greater complications for the host library.⁵ The other article, "Leadership Development: A CLR Internship Program at the University of Missouri-Columbia for Recent Library School Graduates," by Rosie L. Albritton, described a CLR-sponsored program known as the CLR Intern-Scholar Program. The University of Missouri-Columbia libraries started their six-month program in 1986 with a two-year grant. It was designed for librarians with less than three years of experience. This program included a strong mentoring element and formal coursework in management.⁶

Overall, these programs were acknowledged to be rewarding and helpful to career development. Yet the financial and psychological costs were deemed too high to continue them. Those internships that required participants to temporarily leave their current job and family were particularly hard on interns. Many felt isolated and found the adjustment to a new library very difficult to make. Additionally, there were the financial costs of the program and the cost to the host institution in the form of disruption of the library director's schedule. This model of internship has largely disappeared.

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In its place has emerged the leadership institute. There has been a great deal written recently about these institutes as any search of the library literature will show. Two of the most well known are the Frye Leadership Institute, which is sponsored by the Council on Library and Information Resources (formerly CLR), EDUCAUSE and Emory University, and the ACRL/Harvard Leadership Institute.⁷ Leadership institutes last a shorter period of time, generally not longer than two weeks, and focus on a management issue or problem often in the form of a case study. Participants are able to develop contacts and a network of support as well as a greater understanding of the management problem they are studying. Also, the shorter time period puts less strain on participants. Still, leadership institutes remain competitive and costly.

Moreover, leadership institutes do not offer hands-on experience or deal with a range of typical concerns: community outreach, public relations, library budget, and personnel issues, to name a few. Participants are not forced to juggle responsibilities or think on their feet the way they would in a real-life situation. It is for these reasons this paper will not examine leadership institutes but will instead concentrate on internships that provide opportunities for hands-on experience.

Method and Definition of Terms

This paper uses data from an unpublished survey conducted by Marilyn Genther for the Library Administration and Management Association (LAMA) Education Committee in 2003.⁸ All fifty-six accredited library schools were contacted, and twenty-one responded. This survey was particularly beneficial because it provided information about current practices. However, from the responses, it was apparent that terminology such as “practicum” and “internship” were being defined differently by participants. Thus, the question, “Does your school provide internships as part of your curriculum?” was particularly problematic. As a result, a follow-up survey was undertaken in February 2004. Data also was obtained from the Web sites of all fifty-six ALA-accredited institutions. These Web sites were examined to ascertain if the institutions provided internship opportunities or required an internship for graduation; whether management experience was specifically mentioned as included in hands-on experience; and, in the case where experience in management was mentioned, how it was incorporated into the program.

Most schools offered hands-on experience in conjunction with course offerings. Twenty-eight schools offered links to additional pages of information about internships that were outside of course offerings.⁹ The word “internship” is being used as a very general term to include all types of hands-on library experience offered—paid, unpaid, for credit, not for credit, but which constituted at least one semester or the equivalent. The terminology used for this

experience included well over sixteen variations including supervised field work, field experience, library science practice, and preprofessional job. Often a school would use multiple terms in their course listings, offering, for example, both a practicum and fieldwork. Grouping the terms in a very general way, the term “internship” was used 34 percent of the time, followed closely by “practicum” at 32 percent. Varying forms of the term “fieldwork” were used 24 percent, and 10 percent fell into the other category.

Findings

Does Your School Provide Internships as Part of Your Curriculum?

Fifty-four out of the fifty-six ALA-accredited institutions provide practicums or internships, usually for credit, in their course listings. However, all institutions offer opportunities to gain hands-on library experience either through a practicum or internship course or an extracurricular internship.

Does Your School Require an Internship for Graduation?

Six schools have the requirement that students must complete an internship before graduation. These schools are: State University of New York at Albany, Long Island University, University of North Texas, Texas Women’s University, University of Missouri, and Université de Montreal.

Is Management Experience Noted in Conjunction with an Internship?

The survey found that most schools do not offer internships that explicitly state that management experience is included. However, 30 percent of schools stated that internships were student-driven and customized to the student’s goals and interests (see figure 1).

Nine out of fifty-six institutions specifically mention on their Web sites the possibility of gaining management experience from internships (see figure 2). However, once again, many programs also report that internships are driven by student interest. So, management experience could be included if a student were focused and driven enough to seek it out.

Each library school that mentioned management experience specifically has a unique way of including a management component in its internship experience. Most are related to courses (see sidebar).

When Do Students Decide to Pursue a Career in Library Administration?

On the survey, schools overwhelmingly responded that the choice to go into management was made sometime

after graduation. Seventy-nine percent said that students chose to go into administration during their career, while 19 percent did not respond to the question. Only 2 percent believed students chose a career in administration while in school. All library schools offer some means for students to get experience in a library setting, and there seemed to be universal agreement as to the importance of hands-on experience when it comes to training for the profession. Yet there seemed to be little emphasis on training in library administration. Few schools offer opportunities for experience in this area. There is no wonder at this lack of emphasis when the general consensus is that it takes a certain amount of experience in the profession before individuals become interested in administration. However, given the customized nature of the internship, it would appear that if a student were focused enough, he or she would be able to find or request an internship that would provide experience in library administration. It is clear that management as a career path is not being promoted at least with respect to providing opportunities for experience in the field. Management experience is rarely explicitly offered and certainly not required.

Conclusion

Why focus on hands-on experience? Much of the literature in management recognizes that real-world situations are more complex and the problems more subtle than management theory can support. Theory alone will not test an individual's skills, and there is general agreement that there is a big difference between theory and practice.¹⁰

For students currently in an MLS program, experience in management is generally available to those who choose it, look for it, and work for it. Internships in management are very much based on personal goals and motivation. Few individuals at this juncture look for or are encouraged to gain management experience.

After graduate school the choices are far fewer. Management internships that followed the CLR style were deemed too costly by all sides and served only a few select individuals. Leadership institutes have tried to fill the demand for experience, but they have not succeeded in providing hands-on experience. ARL maintains a searchable online database of internship opportunities.¹¹ However, as of December 2004 only one internship provided a description that included management experience when the database was searched by keyword. Late 2004, ARL awarded a fellowship to a group from five member libraries for a new program to develop leadership abilities for those who would be directors of large academic libraries.¹² At this stage, it remains to be seen how successful the program will be.

Clearly, there is a need that is not being met. The profession could benefit from an internship model that allows hands-on experience, but that is more inclusive and requires fewer personal sacrifices. Also, greater emphasis on manage-

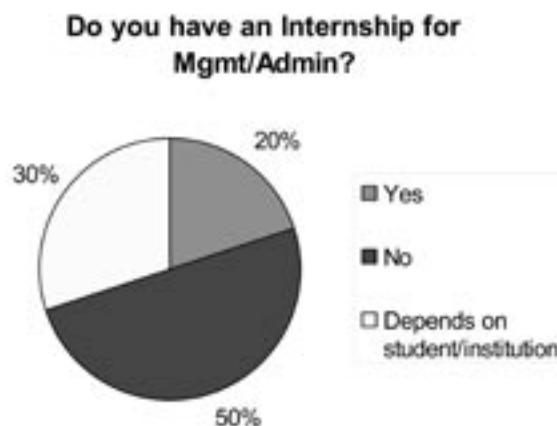


Figure 1. Survey Results

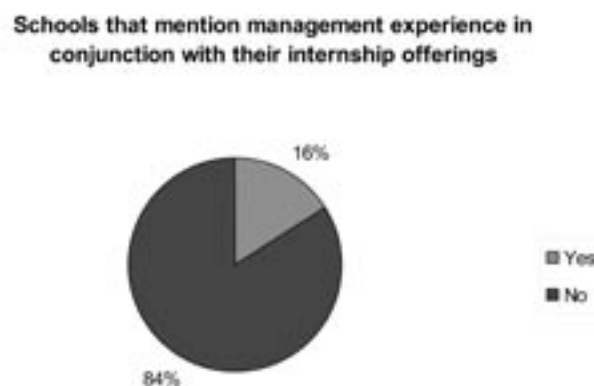


Figure 2. Web Analysis

ment in library school, or the inclusion of some amount of management experience in the school's internship programs, could introduce more qualified candidates to the field.

One suggestion for further study would be along the lines of the Columbia University's late-1980s internship program and would investigate what opportunities might be available within large academic or public libraries. Perhaps libraries should develop their own programs for internal or external intern candidates. Or these libraries could have a plan in place should someone qualified express serious interest. This would serve the library and the intern in a number of ways. Libraries that offer internal management internships are more likely to keep good employees as they develop in their career path and the intern could choose the location and type of library he or she desires. Finally, if a student is driven enough to want an internship, LAMA members could act within their institutions as facilitators. As suggested by LAMA's Education Committee's chair, Tracy Bicknell Holmes, members should be aware of management internships or internships that have management components. LAMA members could even maintain a shared database and could also assist those who are not already aware of what they need by mentoring future interns to seek experiences that are most beneficial to their careers.

References and Notes

1. Paula T. Kaufman, "Where Do the Next 'We' Come from? Recruiting, Retaining, and Developing Our Successors," *ARL Bimonthly Report* 221 (Apr. 2002): 1-2. Accessed June 29, 2005, www.arl.org/newsltr/221/recruit.html.
2. A preliminary survey of literature was done by Andrea Dinkleman on behalf of the LAMA Education Committee and is used with her permission. Andrea Dinkleman is currently working at Iowa State University.
3. Nancy E. Gwinn et al., "CLR Academic Library Management Intern Program: A Symposium," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 6, no. 4 (Sept. 1980): 196-207.
4. Caroline A. Mitchell, "The CLR Academic Library Management Intern Program," *Library Administration & Management* 6, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 29-35.
5. Louise S. Sherby, "The Management Intern Program at the Columbia University Libraries," *College and Research Libraries News* 48, no. 7 (July/Aug. 1987): 406-8.
6. Rosie L. Albritton, "Leadership Development: A CLR Internship Program at the University of Missouri-Columbia for Recent Library School Graduates," *College and Research Libraries News* 48, no. 10 (Nov. 1987): 618-23.
7. Frye Leadership Institute. Accessed June 29, 2005, www.fryeinstitute.org; ACRL/Harvard Leadership Institute. Accessed June 29, 2005, www.gse.harvard.edu/~ppe/highered.
8. Marilyn Genthner, unpublished internship survey done on behalf of LAMA Education Committee (Spring 2003).
9. This paper does not include internship experiences for school library media concentrations in library school. These programs often have very different requirements from those of all other library types. Many schools require a hand-on experience for the school media program but not for other tracts, and it would be misleading to say that a school required an internship when really only it only required the internship for one program.
10. Beverly P. Lynch, "Theory and Practice," *Library Administration & Management* 18, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 30-34; Richard De Gennaro, "Theory vs. Practice in Library Management," *Library Journal* 108, no. 13 (June/July 1983): 1,318-21; Linda L. Lillard, "Strengthening the Profession: Education and Practitioner Collaboration," *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 29, no. 5 (Sept. 2003): 316-19.
11. ARL Research Library Residency and Internship Programs. Accessed December 21, 2004, www.arl.org/careers/residencies.html.
12. ARL Research Library Leadership Fellows Program. Accessed June 29, 2005, www.arl.org/olms/rllf.

Programs Offering Management Experience

University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)

http://is.gseis.ucla.edu/courses/course_catalog.htm
Course offered #497: Fieldwork in Libraries or Information Organizations. "Concentration must be on managerial or other professional problems of the site."

Florida State University

<http://slis-nine.lis.fsu.edu/isweb/internship/search/exp.html>

In the special link to internship information there is a way to search by the type of experience that a site offers. One choice is *Administration/Management*.

Indiana University

www.slis.indiana.edu/courses/description.php?course_id=62

Found through the course listing for internship, not the separate internship link, which would not let a nonstudent search. The course listed is L596: Internship in Library and Information Science. Internships are listed by region. North and Central offer Public Librarianship—Management. Southern offers Public Librarianship—Management and Management, Special Projects in Academic Library.

Louisiana State University

http://slis.lsu.edu/syllabi/7900/field_exp.pdf

In the manual describing requirements of the field experience, students are told that they will be asked to describe the environment of the work site including roles of personnel, management, and budget concerns including the allocation of resources.

Syracuse University

www.syracuse.edu/publications/gradcat/ist.pdf

The description states that the internship can be to some extent an exploration on the student's part, but "at the very least, the student should be explicit about what the objectives of this practical experience should be: management skills . . ." (page 6 of PDF).

Kent State University

www.slis.kent.edu/courses/catalog.php
Course offered #60792: Internship in Library Supervision and Management. Intended for Ph.D. students only.

University of Washington

www.ischool.washington.edu/programs/mlis/portfolio.aspx
Students are required to submit a portfolio prior to graduation. One element must be "a significant leadership experience."

University of Toronto

www.fis.utoronto.ca/programs/calendar/courses.htm#elective

Course offered #FIS2158H: Management of Corporate and Other Special Information Centers. Major component of the course is a practicum.

McGill University

www.gslis.mcgill.ca/Mittermeyer/Practicum/Introduction.htm

On the course description page is a link for the GLIS 699: Practicum in Information Services Web site. Management is mentioned in the introduction. The practicum is designed to "ensure that students have an overview of library and information activities such as: organization of information, dissemination of information, selection and/or evaluation of information, automation and management."