

How to Use Free Online Tools to Recruit and Manage Remote LIS Interns

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Introduction

Practicum students from Library and Information Science (LIS) programs can be valuable additions to a library workforce.¹ LIS practicum students have generally completed the bulk of their coursework and are capable of performing professional work at the level of librarians given adequate supervision.² Additionally, such internship experiences tend to be unpaid, so the host institution needs only to provide training, supervision and access to a workstation to reap the rewards of this large, skilled labor pool. In a period during which many libraries have had to make drastic cuts in the size of their full-time staff, the opportunity to supplement existing teams or launch new initiatives with unpaid LIS intern support is an attractive proposition. Likewise, interns have the opportunity to gain practical experience collaborating with future colleagues on real library projects—sometimes in a leadership capacity.

However, there are several challenges that hosting LIS interns presents. Some institutions are not located near enough to a library school to effectively recruit and interact with LIS students. Other institutions lack the workstations or equipment needed to host interns on site.³ Finally, many libraries may be wary of the considerable time and effort required to establish and administer an internship experience.⁴

For such libraries, hosting a remote internship program—in which participants conduct work off-site—might be a viable option. Remote interns use their own technology equipment and work independently to complete tasks and projects on their own time. Remote supervisors conduct some or all of the traditional management tasks associated with hosting an intern using online tools. Transitioning supervisory interactions to online tools makes it possible to interact with LIS interns remotely and asynchronously. It also automatically creates a detailed “digital paper trail” for each project, which can be used later to understand successes and challenges of a particular project or to form the basis for future or ongoing projects. Finally, use of online tools for remote intern supervision has been shown to significantly reduce the amount of time that managers spend overseeing projects and interacting reporting students after the initial setup.

Likewise, the call for remote internship experiences for LIS students is growing. Remote internship experiences offer future librarians experience collaborating in a virtual work environment to design and lead projects, accomplish real-world library tasks, collaborate on professional publications and cultivate future colleague relationships. As LIS programs begin to offer online courses and online degrees, the remote internship experience is the next logical step and is often perceived as complementary to face-to-face and virtual coursework.

This article describes how to use free online tools—such as blogs, Google Tools and more—to recruit and manage interns or volunteers. The author has established successful remote

internship programs using online tools for the University of Houston Digital Library (UHDL, internship website, <http://info.lib.uh.edu/about/internships/digital-services-internship-program>) as well as the South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA, internship website, <http://www.saadigitalarchive.org/about#internship-tab>) and will present each as a case study. The challenges and successes of each program will be discussed in detail including tips and tricks for institutions that wish to establish similar programs. The online recruitment and management techniques described in this article could also be adopted to streamline administration of in-person volunteer or intern recruitment and management efforts.

Background on LIS Internships

Literature espousing the value of face-to-face internship experiences—also sometimes called field experience or practicum—for LIS students is plentiful. In fact, according to Kelsey, education for future librarians is incomplete without hands-on exposure to real library work.⁵ Additionally, MLIS graduates who leave their programs without library experience have great difficulty finding even entry-level positions.⁶ Rich internship experiences can complement the skills acquired in MLIS studies and help graduates secure early career positions. Furthermore, libraries often bemoan the disconnect between LIS education and practice and the internship experience gives libraries an opportunity to directly participate in LIS education.⁷

The relationships built during the internship experience benefit both libraries and students. Internships can aid in recruitment to the profession and can give libraries an opportunity to identify talented graduates early.⁸ Additionally, LIS students can bring innovative ideas to libraries and be catalysts for positive change.⁹ For students, internships can be an avenue for identifying lifelong mentors and future colleagues.¹⁰

Of course, there is value to the institution beyond the relationships built with future colleagues. Calman focuses on hospital libraries, but affirms that volunteers can free librarians for other work and increase the overall manpower of a library team.¹¹ Likewise, school libraries often benefit from volunteer work that allows librarians to focus more time and attention on interacting with students and building compelling collections.¹²

There is also a body of work focusing on effectively recruiting volunteers, though it tends to focus on the non-profit sector generally rather than libraries specifically. Randle identifies growing competition for creative, motivated and competent unpaid interns and suggests some strategies for recruiting high-performing applicants.¹³ Marketing of volunteer opportunities is generally thought to increase the quality of the pool and even decrease the amount of effort required for recruitment in subsequent years.¹⁴ Dahl points out that effective internship supervision is an essential element of intern satisfaction and productivity and that it warrants attention and study.¹⁵ However, because remote internship opportunities are a somewhat new concept, little work has been done to articulate what is needed to provide an enriching experience for the student with a manageable workload for the host institution.

Recruiting Remote Interns Using Online Tools

As with any established or ongoing internship program, much of the recruitment work consists of answering questions regarding the experience. Often, prospective interns have the same or similar questions about how the application and selection processes work, what types of

projects they might be working on, or what participating in remote projects might be like. One strategy that can save considerable time is creating a web presence for the remote internship program. Articulating what to expect before, during, and after the remote internship experience via a website can significantly reduce the amount of time program administrators spend responding to questions. Some prospective students will still email or call with questions. Where detailed responses to inquiries are required, referring students to the website each time ensures that consistent information is given to each individual and may lead prospective remote interns to other information they might consider useful. Content can be added to the website each semester as new and different questions arise and as the program evolves.

Figure 1: UHDLIP website with anchor links for easy access to information

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON LIBRARIES M.D. Anderson Library Today's Hours Open 24 hours

Home About Help

Home » About » Internships »

UH Digital Library Internship Program

Are you interested in learning more about Digital Libraries—one of the fastest growing fields in Library and Information Science? Looking for hands on experience that will help you build a career in the field?

The University of Houston Libraries' Digital Services department accepts applications each fall, spring and summer semester for students seeking internship positions. The UH Digital Library Internship program in the office consists of three components—digitization, metadata and project management—each of which entails full training and hands on experience. The remote internship experience pairs interns with innovative semester-long projects that benefit the UH Digital Library and often result in publications in peer reviewed journals. All of our interns work on exciting projects with historical and educational impact and are valued members of the Digital Services team. Interns are encouraged to participate in library-wide educational and networking opportunities and leave the program with valuable experience working in an academic library environment. We even have opportunities for interns who are interested in working remotely! We are a fun and supportive team and we welcome new ideas from our interns!

More Information

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- How we select interns
- When our interns work
- Where our interns work
- Earn credit for your SLIS program
- Apply for a position
- Application deadlines
- Questions

More Information

Internship experience

Each semester we offer unpaid internship positions for students in the Houston area and around the world. There are two internship experiences to choose from: positions working in the office and positions working remotely.

Interns who are selected to work in the office rotate through three units—digitization, metadata and project management. During each unit, the intern is given complete training and hands-on experience. The digital reforming unit focuses on digital reforming of visual, audio and multimedia materials. During the metadata unit, interns have the opportunity to learn the Dublin Core metadata schema and apply descriptive metadata to digital materials. Finally, the project management unit consists of several projects that examine resource use and project planning. The rotation system allows interns in the office to participate in each step of the full lifecycle of a digital library project.

Interns who are selected to work remotely have the opportunity of working on a variety of projects that provide a snapshot of digital library initiatives. The experience begins with a Skype meeting with Digital Services staff to conduct departmental orientation and discuss project assignments. After this initial meeting, interns work independently or in collaborative groups to complete their assigned project. Remote interns are an important part of our Digital Services team and have taken leadership roles on pilot projects that have contributed significantly to the success of the department. Projects and availability vary by semester.

When our interns work

Interns working in the office have the option of working Monday through Friday between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm. Hours are assigned on a first-come, first-served basis, but we are committed to accommodating all schedules.

Interns who work remotely are welcome to work at their convenience provided they satisfy the hourly requirements of their practicum experience, if applicable.

Where our interns work

Interns working in the office work at the M.D. Anderson Library on the main campus of the University of Houston in Houston, Texas. Click here for information about parking on the UH campus.

Remote interns are welcome to work wherever convenient.

Earn credit for your SLIS program

If you are currently enrolled as a Masters or Ph.D. student in an ALA accredited Library or Information Science program, you can earn credit for your participation in the UH Libraries' Digital Services Internship Program! If you are enrolled in one of the following schools, we have worked with students from your program to award credit at your institution.

- Texas Woman's University*
- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- University of North Texas
- Western State University

If you are currently enrolled in one of the institutions above, simply indicate in your cover letter that you would like to receive credit for your participation in the program.

If you are currently enrolled in another institution, you could be the first from your school to receive credit! If you are interested in the remote internship experience for credit, simply contact your advisor to ask whether your program accepts credit for remote experiences. If you are interested in the office internship experience for credit, simply contact your advisor to verify that this program could be used for credit at your school. Once you receive confirmation, please include this information in your cover letter.

* TWU SLIS Practicum students may earn credit for LS843 by completing the required 120 hours on site working in the office. Although the opportunity to participate in this remote internship does not qualify as a TWU SLIS Practicum, this is an excellent volunteer experience for students and alumni

How we select interns

We select interns based on their interest in online digital collections. Experience using imaging software and creating metadata is a plus, but we can train anyone with a willingness to learn! We encourage applications from all fields and degrees.

Due to liability issues, we can only accept undergraduate or graduate students who are officially enrolled in accredited programs for positions in the office. We also accept remote interns, though the number of positions available each semester varies and priority is given those working toward careers in libraries, archives or museums.

Apply for a position

To be considered for Digital Services Internship position, please complete the online application form. Please note that the online application form will only be available during the recruitment dates listed below. The online application form will ask a few basic questions and will provide instructions on how to submit your cover letter and CV. The UH Digital Library Internship Program is offered each fall, spring and summer semester.

Applications for internship positions will be accepted:

Fall Semester – June 1-15
Spring Semester – October 1-15
Summer Semester – March 1-15

Questions

Feel free to contact Nicos Westbrock with any questions about the internship program by email or at 713.743.8996.

Permalink: <http://lib.jib.uh.edu/digital-services-internship-program>

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UH Home UH System State of Texas Emergency Site

Although neither is presented as "frequently asked questions," both the UHDL Internship Program (UHDLIP) and the SAADA Digital Archive Internship Program (SAADAIP) website contain content explaining questions most frequently asked by prospective and accepted interns. The UHDLIP page, <http://info.lib.uh.edu/about/internships/digital-services-internship-program>, contains anchor links so that prospective interns can jump directly to the information in which they are interested. Likewise, program administrators can use anchor links to refer students directly to the information that corresponds to their inquiry.

The SAADAIP website, <http://www.saadigitalarchive.org/internship>, is similar in format and in content to the UHDLIP website with program information tailored specifically to that organization.

Figure 2: SAADAIP website.

Documenting, preserving and providing access
to South Asian American history!

Read an important announcement about the future of SAADA in our March 2012 update!

Join our e-mail list:
Name* Email*

About

SAADA Digital Archive Internship Program
Are you interested in learning more about digital archives? Looking for hands-on experience that will help you build a career in the field? Wanting to be part of an innovative community-based organization?

The South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA) accepts applications for students seeking remote internship positions. Interns have the opportunity to work on a variety of projects that provide experience engaging with digital archive initiatives. The internship begins with a Skype orientation meeting with SAADA staff to discuss project assignments and expectations. After this initial meeting, interns work independently or in groups to complete their assigned project. Interns are an important part of the SAADA team and can take leadership roles on pilot projects and contribute significantly to the success of the organization. Projects and availability vary by semester.

Eligibility

- Current student (or recent graduate) in an undergraduate or graduate degree program
- Preference given to those able to commit to at least 10 hours/week
- Located in the United States

When our interns work
Interns are welcome to work at their convenience provided that they satisfy the hourly requirements of their practicum experience, if applicable.

Where our interns work
Interns are welcome to work wherever is most convenient.

Earn credit for your degree program
If you are currently enrolled as a student in a degree program, you can earn credit for your participation in the SAADA Digital Archive Internship Program! To receive course credit, contact your advisor to ask whether your program accepts credit for remote internship experiences. Once you receive confirmation, please include this information in your cover letter.

How we select interns
We select interns based on their interest in archives, digital media, South Asian American history or other relevant interests. Experience using imaging software and creating metadata is a plus, but we can train anyone with a willingness to learn! We encourage applications from all fields and degrees.

Apply for a position
To be considered for a SAADA Digital Archive Internship position, please complete the online application form. The online application will ask a few basic questions and will allow you to upload your resume and letter of interest. The SAADA Digital Archive Internship is offered each summer, fall and spring semester.

Applications for internship positions will be accepted:
Spring/Summer Semester -- March 1-15
Fall Semester -- July 1-15
Winter Semester -- November 1-15

Questions
Feel free to contact Samip Mallick with any questions about the internship program by email.

Browse Items
Click a term to initiate a search.

Collection
Gadar Party (65)
Early Immigration (60)
Bhai Bhagwan Singh Gyane (55)
Har Dayal (30)
Bhagat Singh Thind (27)
India Home Rule League (23)
Watumuli Family (21)
Dalip Singh Saund (20)
Hindusthan Association of America (18)
Performing Arts (18)
more...

Language
English (273)
Punjabi (11)
Urdu (6)
German (1)
Hindi (1)
Japanese (1)

Location
California (95)
Illinois (42)
New York (36)
Hawaii (24)
Michigan (23)
more...

Period
1880 - 1922 (202)
1923 - 1945 (109)
1946 - 1964 (41)
1965 - 2000 (52)
2001 - onwards (24)
N/A (42)

Type
Photograph (118)
Text (63)
Correspondence (61)
Moving Image (2)
Audio (1)
Map (1)
Oral History (1)
Poster (1)
Website (1)

Search Items

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As demonstrated by both of the websites above, considerable thought about the nature of the program, the application process and the benefits of participating in such a remote internship program must be given considerable thought in order to generate content for the web presence. Some issues to consider for the website are as follows:

- Will the positions be unpaid or include a stipend or salary?
- What types of projects might the library or department offer?
- How do supervisors plan to interact with remote students?
- Will students work independently or in collaborative groups? Intern teams can learn from each other and share diverse knowledge, whereas individual projects can be easier for project supervisors to manage.
- What steps do students need to take to earn credit for the experience? What is the responsibility of the host institution in this process? Host institution responsibilities vary from institution to institution, so does the library or department need to limit intern recruitment to a few partner LIS programs?
- How will the library solicit and accept applications?
- What value does the remote internship experience offer participants?

Providing detailed information about a remote internship program can also positively impact the quality of applications. Karl suggests that internships exist in a marketplace in which interns select from a variety of potential internship products and that in order to appeal to the highest quality applicants, care should be given to the reputation and face of the internship program.¹⁶ Detail-oriented students who are motivated to advance their careers often respond positively to a well-organized remote internship program with a website that gives a clear sense of the value of the experience they might have. Such students often apply for more than one internship experience; so creating a web presence that attracts competitive applicants is an important strategy for recruiting quality workers. Nevertheless, the remote internship web presence need not be flashy or difficult to implement. The focus should be on providing a detailed and appealing description of the remote internship program. Both websites above were created using Drupal (<http://drupal.org/>)—an open source content management platform. Because these websites are relatively simple, similar websites could be custom developed or could be launched using tools such as Google Sites (<http://sites.google.com>) or even Blogger (<http://blogger.com>) or Wordpress (<http://wordpress.com>).

Once a web presence for the remote internship program has been established, creating an online application process can be another important strategy for saving time and organizing information. When considering which applicants to accept to the remote internship program there may be information needed from each applicant such as complete contact information, what LIS program they participate in, whether or not they will be available to work the minimum required hours, or whether they expect to receive credit for the remote internship experience. Collecting such information in an online application form can be a more efficient way to gather responses than requesting it on the website or via email.

The online application mechanisms for the UHDLIP and the SAADAIP are somewhat different. Originally, both programs used formsite (<http://www.formsite.com/>) to power their application forms. Forms created with formsite allow applicants to attach application materials—such as a CV or letter of interest) directly to their form submission. The free version of formsite only allows 10 responses per form with 50 MB of storage. Therefore, the SAADAIP program

administrator eventually upgraded to the pro account, which offers more form submissions and increased storage capacity.

Figure 3: SAADAIP application form powered by formsite.

The screenshot shows a web form titled "Digital Archive Internship at SAADA". The form includes the following sections:

- Header:** "Digital Archive Internship at SAADA"
- Introduction:** "The SAADA Digital Archive Internship program is offered each summer, fall, and spring semester. Please note that applications for internship programs will be accepted."
- Deadlines:**
 - Spring/Summer Semester -- *Now accepting applications! Applications are due by 11:59pm Central Time on Thursday, March 15, 2012. Decisions will be announced by April 5, 2012 with internships starting in late-May.*
 - Fall Semester -- July 1-15
 - Winter Semester -- November 1-15
- Information:** "For more information about application deadlines or the internship experience, please visit the [SAADA Digital Archive Internship Program](#) website."
- Required Fields:** * First Name, * Last Name, * Email Address, * Phone Number, * Residence Address.
- Interest:** * Are you interested in earning credit for your internship? (Radio buttons: For Credit, Not For Credit)
- Advisor:** If you indicated that you are interested in receiving credit for this internship, have you contacted your advisor? (Radio buttons: Yes, No)
- Education:** * What college, university or institution are you currently attending (or did you recently graduate from)?
- Resume:** * Please upload your resume or CV. (Buttons: Choose File, No file chosen, Upload)
- Cover Letter:** * Please upload your cover letter or letter of interest. (Buttons: Choose File, No file chosen, Upload)
- Hours:** * Most degree programs require 120 hours of work over the course of the semester which works out to about 10 hours per week. For non-credit earning interns, preference is given to those who are able to work a similar number of hours. Are you able to work at least 10 hours per week? (Radio buttons: Yes, No)
- Footer:** * Indicates Response Required
- Submit:** A "Submit" button at the bottom of the form.

An alternative to formsite is Google Docs (<http://docs.google.com>), which is the tool that currently powers the UHDLIP application form.

Figure 4: Page 1 of UHDLIP application form powered by Google Docs.

UH Digital Library Internship Application

The UH Digital Library Internship program is offered each fall, spring and summer semester. Please note that applications for internship positions will be accepted:

Fall Semester--June 1-15
Spring Semester--October 1-15
Summer Semester--March 1-15

For more information about application deadlines or the internship experience, please visit the UH Digital Library Internship Program website (<http://tiny.cc/uhdslp>).
* Required

First Name *

Last Name *

Email Address *

Phone Number *

Are you interested in working in the office or working remotely? *

Which library school program are you affiliated with? *
Please indicate affiliation if you are a student or alum of a program.

- Texas Women's University
- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- University of North Texas
- Wayne State University
- I am not affiliated with any library school program
- Other:

Are you interested in earning credit for your internship? *

If you indicated above you are interested in receiving credit for this internship, have you contacted your advisor?

Most library school programs require 120 hours of work over the course of the semester which works out to about 10 hours per week. For non-credit earning interns, preference is given to those who are able to work a similar number of hours. Are you able to work at least 10 hours per week? *

Powered by [Google Docs](#)
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To work around the fact that documents cannot be uploaded directly to Google Docs, the UHDLIP program also utilizes Microsoft Office Outlook (<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/outlook>) to automate acceptance of application materials. If Outlook is not available, Gmail (<http://gmail.google.com>) is a free alternative that provides the necessary functionality.

When applicants are asked to submit their CV or letter of reference they are provided an email and are requested to use a specific email subject.

Figure 5: Page 2 of UHDLIP application form with instructions on how to submit application materials via email.

The screenshot shows a Google Docs form titled "UH Digital Library Internship Application". It includes a "Required" section with the heading "Submission of Application Materials". The text states that the application is not complete until materials are emailed to Nicci Westbrook at rnwestbrook@gmail.com. It lists two required items: a cover letter or letter of interest, and a CV or resume. It provides the email subject line "UHDL_Internship_Application" and a confirmation message. Below the instructions are two checkboxes, each with a "Yes" label, for acknowledging the receipt of confirmation emails for the cover letter and the resume/CV. At the bottom, there are "Back" and "Submit" buttons, and a footer that says "Powered by Google Docs".

The administrator of the remote internship program can then use the specific subject of the email—in this case “UHDL_Internship_Application”—to create a filter or rule using Outlook. For the UHDLIP administrator, when an email is received with the subject “UHDL_Internship_Application” Outlook automatically files the message in a folder designated for remote internship applications and sends an automated reply letting applicants know their materials have been successfully submitted. The instructions on the application website indicate to students that if they have not received a confirmation email, their application materials have not been received. The final page of the form then asks the applicant to indicate that they have received a confirmation email verifying their materials have been successfully submitted. This extra step reduces the number of application form submissions received without corresponding application materials.

Both formsite and forms created in Google Docs also make it possible to create specific periods during which applications will be accepted for each semester. Maintaining application periods can help program administrators delineate the time they plan to devote to responding to email inquiries about the program and to organizing and reviewing applications. Using formsite and forms created through Google Docs, program administrators can make a form dormant while preserving the content. This means that prospective interns cannot see the form when the library is not soliciting applications. Formsite also provides functionality that allows the program administrator to set open and close dates, while Google Docs forms must be manually opened and closed. Designating a short period of time—usually about two weeks—as an application submission period can concentrate the inquiries related to the remote internship program so that program administrators with other obligations can focus their time elsewhere during the remainder of the year.

Whether adhering to an internship season or not, placing a call for interns is another potentially time-consuming, continual responsibility. One key to streamlining the task is to assemble a list of LIS student listservs to which a call can be sent each semester the program is offered. Promoting the remote internship program at conferences and to LIS schools with online

programs can be good places to begin. Depending on the number of interns a library or department is able to host, only a handful of LIS listservs may be needed. Once a list of listservs or LIS school representatives has been compiled, messages can be automated using calendar reminders that recur annually along with emails set to send at a future date. Promoting remote internship opportunities via social media can be another effective way to recruit technology savvy applicants. HootSuite (<http://hootsuite.com>) and TweetDeck (www.tweetdeck.com) are tools that allow program administrators to create tweets set to publish at a future date. By setting messages and tweets to publish in the future, an administrator could prepare a year's worth of remote internship calls in an afternoon rather than spending time each semester to repeat the call.

At the end of the recruitment and application process remote internship program administrators should be equipped with a spreadsheet—produced automatically by the online application form—containing information about each applicant along with application materials from each applicant. If interns are to be selected collaboratively, these items can be easily combined into a single PDF and distributed to the selection team. If the pool is adequate, interns can be selected and online management of remote interns can begin.

Remote Intern Orientation

As with any face-to-face internship program, remote interns must receive training on the tools they will be expected to use, a detailed explanation of their project and a clear indication of the expectations of their supervisor. The UHDLIP and the SAADAIP supervisors conduct this orientation using two tools simultaneously—Skype (www.skype.com) and Google Docs. Skype is a free tool that allows video conferencing. The live screen sharing functionality can be particularly useful when training students on new technology tools, although it is not presently available during video calls with more than two participants. Online orientation sessions usually take between one to one-and-one-half hours depending on how familiar remote interns are with technology tools and how tech savvy they are overall. If a library or department is concerned about the time needed to conduct technology training, favoring advanced technology experience in applicants or including technology questions on the online application form can result in a more tech savvy remote intern work force.

During each orientation session, new remote interns are provided hands-on training on the technology tools that will structure their remote internship experience. Using the Skype screen sharing feature, the remote intern trainer can demonstrate a procedure on their machine and then switch and ask the student to work through the process. Even if screen sharing capability is not possible—perhaps due to bandwidth issues or multiple participants—the trainer can ask the student to perform a procedure as described, after which the trainer should be able to refresh their screen and see some tangible results. The UHDLIP and SAADAIP teams use Google Docs, Google Calendar (<http://calendar.google.com>) and Blogger most heavily as described below.

A detailed explanation of the semester-long project can be delivered via Google Docs and discussed in detail during the Skype orientation session (Appendix A,B). The UHDLIP and SAADAIP supervisors tend to design projects with multiple phases for remote interns. The remote internship supervisor can use such a document to project the amount of time each phase might take, assign deliverables for each phase and provide detailed written instructions in the form of a living document shared between all project participants. As a living document,

deliverable deadlines and project phases can be adjusted as the project proceeds. Because Google Docs is a collaborative word processing tool, the most current information about the project is instantly available to each team member. Providing a detailed, written project plan at the beginning of the project and discussing the plan in detail during the initial Skype orientation can empower remote interns to work more independently. Additionally, detailed project plans can be reused as the basis for repeat or ongoing projects that can be conducted with very little initial set up.

Communication of supervisor expectations can also be accomplished during the Skype orientation. The UHDLIP and SAADAIP project supervisors usually define the remote intern role as project lead—with co-leads if more than one remote intern is working collaboratively on the same project. As project lead, remote interns are often expected to create documentation and conduct and evaluate work. Supervisors serve as official managers of the remote intern—especially with regards to paperwork that needs to be completed for the LIS program where applicable. Supervisors also serve as institutional resources, providing remote interns with information only a member of the institution would know such as details about past projects, current procedures or organizational culture aspects.

One of the most important goals of the Skype orientation session—though it need not be stated explicitly during the call—is building a culture of online management. In her recent article Westbrook introduced the concept of online management, which is a web-based communication technique that requires buy-in from each participant in order to be effective. Establishing expectations regarding communication via online tools should be enough to lay the groundwork for a successful online management interaction. However, cultivating consistent use of online management techniques such as those described in by Westbrook requires diligence—especially at onset—on the part of the remote internship supervisor. Westbrook offers more detailed information relating to online management techniques in her article in the *Journal of Library Innovations*.¹⁷

Project Management with Remote Interns

After the Skype orientation session, work on the project can begin in earnest following the phases outlined in the project plan. During the working phase, UHDLIP and SAADAIP remote interns use shared folders in Google Docs to create documents, spreadsheets, etc. and perform the work of the internship itself. Shared folders in Google Docs collocate the materials for a project—all of which are automatically shared with folder collaborators. Additionally, heavy use of Google Docs eliminates the need for team members to have access to Microsoft Office tools such as Word or Excel on their personal machines. During the project working period, remote interns working in teams are encouraged to initiate Skype meetings with each other and with supervisors as needed. Remote interns also use an internship blog and Google Calendar to keep supervisors up-to-date on the status of the project and the hours they have worked.

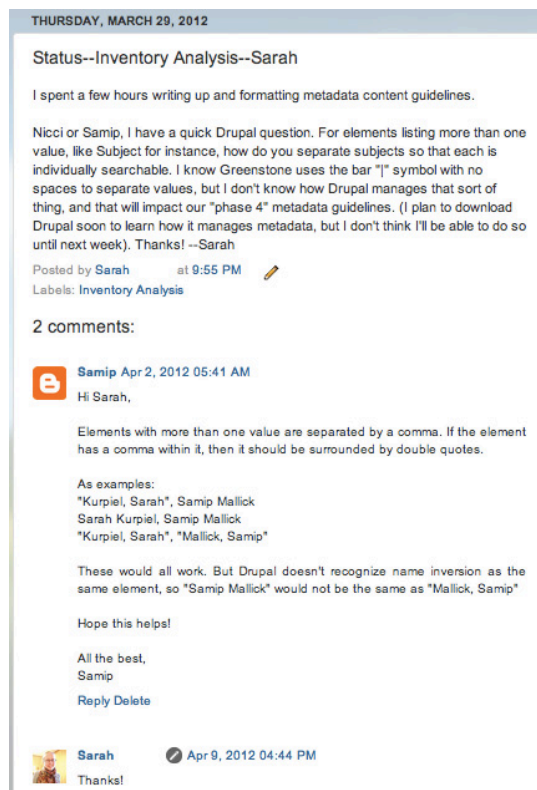
The internship blog is a private blog that is only available to current remote interns and supervisors. Remote interns are expected to post to the blog after they have completed work on the project on any given day to let the supervisor know the status of the work. Status posts should be of sufficient detail so that on the off chance that an intern needs to suddenly leave the project, another intern could be assigned the work and could easily determine where to pick up. That said, remote intern turnover is usually low and this article provides discussion on how to retain remote interns.

Figure 6: Example of a status post for a remote intern project.



Use of the internship blog allows supervisors to follow along with the project as it unfolds. It also creates a robust “digital paper trail” that preserves details about the progression of the project. The UHDLIP and SAADAIP programs use the “labels” feature in Blogger to tag all posts related to a particular project with the same tag. This allows all information about a project to be viewed during and after the project and separates information on simultaneously run projects. Remote interns are also encouraged to ask questions in their status posts on the intern blog.

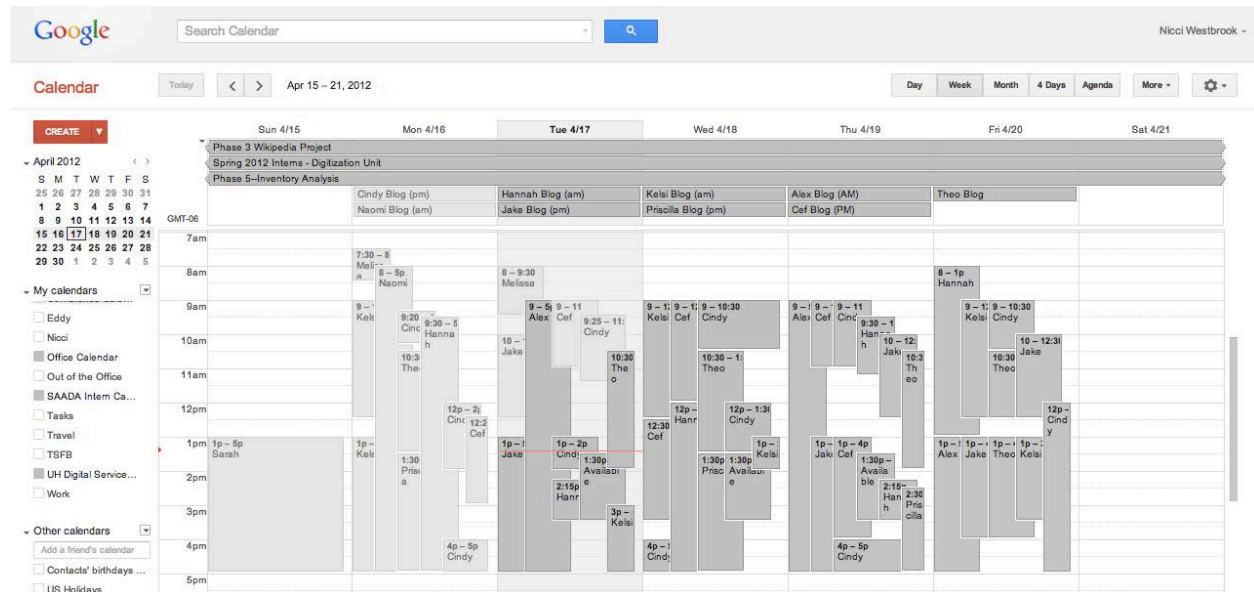
Figure 7: Example of a status post from a remote intern containing a question and a supervisor response.



Responding to student questions via the blog is a particularly useful strategy if more than one remote intern is working collaboratively or if a project is likely to be repeated in subsequent semesters. Everyone with access to the blog can see both the question and response and supervisors can point students to previously answered questions even from past semesters when applicable.

Google Calendar is used for both phase tracking and hourly tracking for remote interns. When UHDLIP and SAADAIP supervisors design the phases of the project with due dates for deliverables, they also enter these dates into a shared Google Calendar. As deadlines approach, supervisors can set aside time to review remote intern work and provide feedback and remote interns have easy access to deadline information. Additionally, remote interns are expected to enter the hours they work on the project into the same Google Calendar. This is particularly important for students who wish to earn practicum credit for their internship experience. At the end of the semester, the supervisor can verify that the student met the minimum requirement of hours for their program. During the project, supervisors can get a sense of how many hours each intern is devoting to collaborative projects and touch base if they notice a long period of time without any hours reported.

Figure 8: View of Google Calendar showing project phases and hours reported on a project.



As remote interns prepare deliverables for each phase of the project, they should be reviewed by supervisors and feedback should be given. Depending on how a project is designed, feedback from the supervisor might even be needed before the project can proceed, so Google Calendar can be used to communicate supervisor review time as well. Either way, feedback on deliverables is key to ensuring the project progresses in a way that is satisfactory to the library and the intern.¹⁸ UHDLIP and SAADAIP remote interns often submit deliverables via folders in Google Docs as described above. Depending on the project, interns might also be able to perform project work directly in library systems. Because the UHDL and SAADA are both digital collections with web administration interfaces, interns have worked directly in these systems in

the past. If this style of deliverable is not a good fit for your institution, remote intern work could be captured in a spreadsheet to be reviewed and entered by library staff at a later date.

As the remote internship draws to a close, UHDLIP interns are asked to complete an evaluation of the internship experience. SAADAIP administrators are currently working to implement a similar survey. The UHDLIP survey is a multi-page survey powered by SurveyMonkey (<http://surveymonkey.com>) that asks remote interns to evaluate their competencies with core skills supervisors taught over the course of the semester; to evaluate the usefulness and ease of use of the blog, Google calendar, and other online tools; and to suggest ways the project could be designed better if it were to be continued during a future semester. Remote interns receiving a grade for their work over the course of the semester are not required to provide their names and are not required to submit a response to the survey until after they have been evaluated by a supervisor. These two guidelines help create a safe environment for remote interns to offer honest feedback about their experiences. Survey results are used to improve the remote internship program each semester.

Challenges and Successes of the UHDLIP and SAADAIP

The most challenging aspect of hosting the UHDLIP is maintaining accountability of remote interns—especially those not earning credit toward an LIS degree. The UHDLIP program has had several interns that either dropped the program mid-semester or contributed minimally to collaborative projects. After examining remote intern demographics, it was determined that some interns not receiving credit seemed less motivated throughout the program. This may be attributed to the fact that they are not required to complete a specific number of hours over the course of the semester and are not being officially evaluated by the remote intern supervisor as part of an advanced degree. The UHDLIP administrator has taken two approaches to mitigating this problem. First, the UHDLIP administrator now requires that all remote interns commit to working at least 10 hours per week, which is roughly equivalent to the number of hours remote interns earning credit would be required to work. Second, in the remote intern selection process, when candidates seem equally qualified the UHDLIP supervisory team tends to favor students earning official credit from an LIS Program.

Conversely, SAADAIP program administrators have noticed no appreciable difference between performance and accountability of remote interns earning credit versus those not earning credit and has continued to select interns solely based on qualifications and fit. They have, however, experienced inconsistent adoption of the blog and Google Calendar across the board. In the future, remote internship supervisors plan to do more to build the culture of online management—explaining in detail during the online orientation the importance of reporting status and hours and diligently requesting status and hours posts during the first month or so of the program. Additionally, during the first semester of the program SAADAIP interns suffered mildly from a lack of supervisor institutional expertise. Luckily, the remote internship experience was co-lead by the President of the Board of Directors of SAADA, so both the interns and the co-lead were able to learn more about the institution including existing procedures and workflows.

The successes for both UHDLIP and SAADAIP have been plentiful. Initiation of the UHDLIP significantly augmented a small departmental staff and made possible the launch and successful completion of initiatives that the Digital Services Department otherwise would have lacked the resources to conduct. Online recruitment and management techniques have

minimized the amount of staff time spent supervising and providing feedback to remote interns. While UHDLIP recruitment efforts were initially time-consuming, automation of initial email interaction and creation of the website to preempt many frequently asked questions has removed much of the logistical burden from remote internship administrators during the recruitment and application periods. The UHDLIP program administrator now spends an estimated eight hours total on intern recruitment each semester—which includes sending the call, responding to questions, processing incoming application materials, meeting with the selection team and notifying applicants. During the internship experience, UHDLIP supervisors subscribe to the intern blog and can efficiently respond to project-related questions and post instructions that can be reused without being recreated. Furthermore, extensive project plans and deep discussions about the internship experience during the Skype orientation combined with online reporting mechanisms empower interns to work independently, requiring less daily supervision from managers. UHDLIP project supervisors usually spend less than one hour per week shepherding remote intern projects once the online orientation period is complete.

The UHDLIP has also been operating long enough to reap the benefits of detailed project plans and intern blog posts used to create the basis for ongoing projects. The Wikipedia initiative is a successful example of this that requires very little planning on the part of the UHDLIP project supervisor due to the robust and useful documentation produced during the first semesters of the project.¹⁹ Digital Services staff has also had the privilege of establishing long-term professional relationships with remote interns who later became valuable collaborators in the field. Digital Services staff has co-authored papers, co-planned conference panels and shared ideas with past remote interns as they transition into permanent positions as early career librarians.

The SAADAIP team was able to launch a program based on the UHDLIP in a staggeringly short period of time—just a few weeks—and is beginning to experience the benefits of ongoing remote intern projects and an augmented workforce. The estimated total time needed to implement the SAADAIP Online Management System and internship web presence was only three hours by a team of two—which included program planning time. Additionally, SAADAIP administrators have enjoyed an overwhelming level of interest in the remote internship program with increasingly large and competitive pools of interns each semester. Both the UHDLIP and SAADAIP administrators are working to build and strengthen each program.

Conclusion

As LIS programs grow their online curriculum offerings and as the field of LIS becomes increasingly technology-based, LIS students are seeking new ways to demonstrate they can effectively work in this online environment. Meanwhile, as budgets for staff shrink, libraries need help to sustain the services they have always provided and establish new and innovative initiatives. Remote internship programs—when efficiently run using free online tools—can benefit both LIS students and libraries and are a key step toward a tech savvy librarian workforce.

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Appendix A—Example Remote Internship Orientation Training Schedule

Orientation Training Schedule

Intro and Tech Training

- Welcome
- Contact info to google docs
- Make sure they have access to blog and calendar
- Tour of blog
- Procedures of blog
- Have them make a sample post on the intern blog
- Tour of google cal
- Have them create single, repeating event, delete and change single, repeating event
- Sharing in Google Docs folder

Department and Project:

- Department History and Overview--context of project
- Summary-- Why we use wikipedia and wikimedia
- Role of the Intern=Project Lead; Justin=Resident Expert (but still your supervisor: deliverables, hours, etc.)
- Goals of the project -- review current Wikipedia use, project new items, implement those items

Tentative Deliverables Schedule

- [Two Phases, two deliverables.](#)

Appendix B—Example Remote Internship Project Plan

Wikipedia Internship -- Spring 2012

Wikipedia Log Ins

#1 (Deirdre)

User name:

Password:

#2 (Rumela)

User name:

Password:

Gmail Log In

Email:

Password:

UH Digital Library Internship Schedule -- 14 weeks

Phase 1: Review previous Wikipedia project and identify UHDL items to examine-- January 23-February 10 (3 weeks)

- Review previous [Wikipedia Document](#), and all documentation in previous Wikipedia folders
- Identify new collections and portions of old collections that were not previously added to Wikipedia in past projects and add them to the spreadsheet, one row per item.

Deliverable:

- [Google Spreadsheet](#) containing a list of items that will be examined to find matches with articles currently published in Wikipedia--Due February 10th.

Phase 2: Match UHDL items to existing Wikipedia articles -- February 11-March 9 (4 weeks)

- Think of topics/subtopics that might have articles in Wikipedia for each item in your [Google Spreadsheet](#) (Column C).
- If an article is found, enter the title and links in your [Google Spreadsheet](#) (Column G-H)
- Review and revise columns C, G-H until you have matched as many items as possible.

Deliverable:

- [Google Spreadsheet](#) containing a list of items with corresponding articles in Wikipedia

Phase 3: Embed new entries in Wikipedia articles -- March 10-April 30 (7 weeks)

- Add images via [Wikimedia Commons](#) to [Wikipedia](#).
- Indicate additions in your [Google Spreadsheet](#)(Column J)
- Create a Google document in our shared Google Folder and co-author a short write-up of your insights on the project including suggestions for the next interns. (1-2 pages)

Deliverable:

- Additions to Wikipedia
- [Google Spreadsheet](#) detailing all of the additions you made to Wikipedia
- Project write-up