Information Services Internship Report

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September 26, 2011
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**Introduction**

The goal of the 2011 Information Services internship position was to offer one or two returning iSchool students a chance to work in a fast-paced information centre: the Faculty of Information Inforum. The experience was split between two very different but related aspects: frontline work on the Information Desk and project work (with emphasis on the latter). Information Services interns were intended to leave the experience with a solid understanding of the diversity and uniqueness of customer needs in an information setting, and of the less obvious backstage work that defines how the library presents itself. Judith Majonis and I were each hired for 20 hours per week, two hours of which were devoted to front desk work. Our work was supervised by Kathleen Scheaffer, Outreach and Instructional Services Coordinator.

**Why I applied for this position**

I should start by mentioning that I almost didn’t apply for this position. I started my degree at the iSchool in September 2010, which is also when I started working part-time as a Student Assistant at the Inforum and as a Graduate Student Library Assistant at the reference desk at Robarts Library. When Kathleen announced the internship posting and circulated it around the iSchool, my first thought was “it sounds great, but I can’t possibly.” I was taking summer courses—something I had consciously avoided up until then—and I was afraid 20 hours a week on top of my summer hours at Robarts would be too difficult. I changed my mind for two main reasons:

1. It occurred to me that I was in a professional program, and job experience is as important, if not more important than coursework. Since my background is in English Literature, the MI was literally the first academic pursuit I had ever made with the end goal of employment. This concept was something to wrap my head around indeed.
2. Having worked as a Student Assistant for the past two semesters, I already knew that the Inforum boasted one of the most positive, encouraging, and productive working environments I had experienced anywhere. I already felt privileged to be part of such an energetic and progressive group of people, and I realized that
to even consider passing up the chance to work closely with this full-time staff of information professionals for an entire four months was pure foolishness.

Summary of work

My internship work can be explained in three parts: Special Projects, Other Projects, and Information Desk. The projects within these categories are listed according to how early in the summer they were initiated.

Special Projects

1) Information Services 2011 User Survey Report

On the first day of the internship, Kathleen explained to me and Judith that one of our foremost goals this summer would be to produce a professional report of the findings from the 2011 Information Services User Survey. The survey was conducted near the end of the Winter term, and iSchool students were encouraged to electronically submit their thoughts, suggestions, and feedback on Information Services staff, facilities, services, and resources. The goal of the report was to exhibit, analyze, and address the students’ feedback, a process that would involve every member of the IS team.

Under Kathleen’s direction, Judith and I compiled the quantitative and qualitative data to produce an early version of the report for internal distribution. The qualitative data were used to create two broad categories: what students liked about Information Services, and areas they felt need improvement. Using Nvivo software, Judith coded the qualitative data and subdivided the two broad categories into themes. Once the preliminary report was finished, Judith and I circulated and presented the findings at an IS staff meeting; from there, we arranged meetings with the Public Services, Information Technology, and Reference teams within the IS unit to discuss areas of improvement relevant to each team. The teams offered solutions to student feedback; with input from the teams, Kathleen, Judith, and I created an Action Plan outlining proposed resolutions and completion dates. We included these action items in the final version, which can be viewed on the iSchool website.
2) Library & Information Services LibGuide

Under the direction of reference librarian Nalini Singh, I began the now ongoing project of an online guide to research materials in the LIS field. After working with Nalini to compile a number of LIS databases, blogs, review sources, reference materials, career resources, online talks, statistical resources, metasites, and more, I used LibGuides software to build a comprehensive and user-friendly online guide. LibGuides, which I learned through online tutorials and a drop-in session offered through University of Toronto Libraries, allowed me to create pages, tabs, embed videos, add photographs, links, widgets, and screenshots that I created using Jing screencast software. The LibGuide is still in progress.

3) Promotions & Outreach: Space Race

As interns supervised by Kathleen, Judith and I were automatically included in the Promotions & Outreach group within Information Services. The group, chaired by Kathleen and comprised of Anna Oh, Ivan Sestak, Nalini Singh, and Elisa Sze, met regularly to discuss promotional initiatives. My largest outreach contribution was project-managing Space Race, an Orientation Week scavenger hunt designed to welcome incoming students and familiarize them with the Inforum and Information Services. Participating students collected 10 different cards from locations in the Inforum to win an Inforum button and qualify for a prize draw.

Senior IT Administrator Ivan Sestak was essential to the success of this project: Ivan set up and managed the Space Race website and image gallery, and was always there to help me with technical challenges. My initiative with Space Race, which was originally developed and launched in Fall 2010, was to revise the project to better represent the Inforum as a technologically rich and diverse space. Ivan and I met regularly to discuss the revamping of Space Race into a QR code scavenger hunt using students’ smart phones or iPads on loan from the Inforum. The new parameters of Space Race allowed students not only to use their own mobile technologies to learn about the space, staff, and resources at the Inforum, but to learn how to engage with some of the Inforum’s technology collection. My efforts on this project were as follows:
1. Preparation: I photographed 10 areas of the Inforum and placed orders from MOO for mini-cards displaying each location. These cards served a dual purpose as Space Race location cards and promotional cards for Information Services. I also wrote original rhymes describing each location, and coordinated the website with Ivan.

2. Staff Training: I created detailed instructions for staff, along with a step-by-step guide for using iPads and Sony Galaxy Tabs, which were to be loaned to students without smart phones, to scan QR codes. I presented these materials at an IS staff meeting, communicated regularly by email with staff, and offered in-person help to staff members.

3. Promotion: I created a promotional banner, LCD screen, and computer background advertising the event. I also wrote contest rules/instructions and promotional emails, and advertised the event on Twitter and Facebook.

4. Prizes: All Space Race participants received an Inforum button. With input from Kathleen Scheaffer, I created multiple button designs, which we then produced with a button maker on generous loan from Margaret Wall at Robarts Library. With permission from the six randomly-drawn winners, I created a promotional screen advertising their success.

4) Academic Writing Workshop and Tutorials

Knowing I had taught writing and grammar courses at Fanshawe College, Kathleen asked if I would be interested in teaching an academic writing workshop during the Fall 2011 Orientation Series. Excited by the prospect, I set to work creating a 90-minute in-class session on academic writing, three five-minute online tutorials, and five detailed handouts that together totaled 16 pages of information for students. The tutorials, entitled “The Thesis Statement,” and “Writing Clearly Parts 1 and 2,” combine Prezi visuals—an online presentation software Kathleen introduced us to—with audio narration. In these brief tutorials, recommendations for thesis statement construction, paragraphing, conciseness, precision, and more are presented through tips, examples, and before-and-after illustrations. My lecture slides, tutorials, and handouts are all available on the Inforum website.

My 90-minute workshop session was offered twice, and more than 100 incoming students registered and attended. The content was delivered through a lecture and an exercise; feedback from students who attended was extremely positive. I created five handouts entitled “Theses & Thesis Statements,” “Style: Writing Clearly,” “Common
Grammatical Errors in Academic Writing,” “Tricks for Remembering Commonly Confused Words,” and “Recommended Resources for Academic Writing.” Each of these handouts was created from scratch, with the exception of “Tricks for Remembering Commonly Confused Words,” which I adapted from one of my previous handouts from Fanshawe. These handouts can be found on the website, and hardcopies are available at the Inforum.

The academic writing workshop, handouts, and tutorials were self-directed projects that allowed me to use my experiences as an instructor at Fanshawe, and to consider the needs of graduate students in an interdisciplinary program. Students in the MI and MMst programs come from an incredible diversity of academic backgrounds, and creating a lesson that met their needs over 90 minutes was an exciting challenge that required much research and planning.

Other Projects

1) Social Networking

Via Facebook and Twitter, Judith and I assisted Kathleen in maintaining a vigorous online presence for Information Services. Under Kathleen’s direction, we took updated photographs of the Inforum staff and space, and posted these to the IS Facebook page; events, updates, and reminders were also posted. Every work day, Judith and I would each find an interesting and relevant article, blog post, or website, and tweet the links. Additionally, full-time staff members contributed enthusiastically to this ongoing project by alerting us to worthwhile links.

2) Literature Searches

I performed two literature searches for Kathleen. The first search investigated connections forged through online dating sites; the second search looked at current uses of social media by various organizations.
3) **Collection Development Projects: Journal and Publisher Searches**

Supervised by Collections and Public Services Coordinator Elisa Sze, this ongoing project involves interns and Student Assistants. Using periodicals and publisher websites, we continue to locate titles that fit with the Inforum’s collection interests, and determine whether a copy has already been purchased. These findings are passed on to Elisa, who either orders the titles or offers us feedback as to why a title was not selected.

4) **Editorial**

Having a background in writing and editing, I was glad to proofread and copyedit for staff whenever needed. My largest editorial project this summer was proofreading the new iSchool website.

5) **Bookmarks Project**

Collections Technician Nadia Moro devised a plan to improve the aesthetics of the photocopy room. After removing a number of instructional signs posted in the copy room, Nadia asked me to create bookmark-sized fliers teaching users how to photocopy, scan, and retrieve print jobs at the Inforum. I designed three different instructional bookmarks that are now available for students to read and/or keep. In accordance with Kathleen’s research on accessibility guidelines, these bookmarks and other signage I created met all accessibility requirements.

6) **Course Registration System**

Information Services offers a number of orientation and instructional workshops at the beginning of the term; while these workshops are free and exclusive to iSchool students, online registration is required to attend. Kathleen asked me to assist in uploading content to the course registration system, and to clone online evaluation forms links for attending students to offer feedback after the workshops. After a brief tutorial from
Kathleen, I created an illustrated step-by-step guide to assist staff in using the course information system.

**Information Desk**

Having worked as an Inforum Student Assistant for two semesters, I was already familiar with the policies and procedures on the Information Desk. When I started as a Student Assistant in September 2010, Nalini and Circulation and Public Services Technician Anna Oh provided me with exceptional training on circulation, shelving, and customer service; Serials and Acquisitions Technician Meera Thirunavukarasu and Elisa Sze offered equally as outstanding training on Information Desk projects. Although calmer in the summer, the Inforum desk is generally a fast-paced environment augmented by a manageable level of unpredictability. As such, questions and challenges were diverse, and every member of the IS staff was always more than willing to assist, answer questions, or provide advice. I have enjoyed the opportunity to interact with the iSchool population, and I look forward to continuing the 2011-2012 academic year as a Student Assistant on the Information Desk.

**My experience and thoughts**

When interviewing for this position, the hiring committee asked me why I had applied. I told them that my reference desk work had introduced me to the distinctiveness of library customer service, and to the enormity of the UTL resources; however, I was now, more than ever, dying to learn about how a library functions internally, and how each member contributes. I could not have found a better place to learn than at the Inforum. The Inforum exemplifies the collaborative team environment where openness, equality, transparency, and mutual respect are promoted in every situation. The members of Information Services internalize these values effortlessly. They are an amazing group, and I am incredibly lucky to have worked with them this summer.
This position defied all the clichés of the depressing, obligatory internship: the summer when interns put in their time as coffee gofers and human copy machines to gain “experience.” The staff accepted us immediately as team members; Kathleen made sure that the lines of communication were always open, we always had interesting work, and we maintained a consistent sense of autonomy and progress. Judith and I participated in everything from the staff barbeque and photo day to staff, faculty, and committee meetings, to Inforum tours for new students. We were both encouraged and proud to represent Information Services at events.

Applying to “library” school was originally, for me, yet another attempt to carve a life for myself working with and around books. I have a BA and MA in English literature and creative writing, and some experience in publishing and post-secondary instruction. I’ve been groping my way toward a bookish career since I learned to read, and like many LIS students, I had (and still have) a very romantic notion of books and stories. Working at the Inforum both strengthened and redefined my love of libraries, which I now understand as exciting and diverse spaces that would be little more than empty rooms of unread books without the collaborative work of such dedicated and effervescent people.

**Acknowledgements**

I am immensely grateful to everyone I worked with at Information Services this summer: Joe Cox, Alex Dvornyak, Tony Lemmens, Gabriel Moga, Nadia Moro, Anna Oh, Ivan Sestak, Nalini Singh, Elisa Sze, and Meera Thirunavukarasu. A huge thank you and good luck to the 2010-2011 graduating Student Assistants for all your help and patience: Amanda Brooks, Ahlya Fountain, Anete Ivsina, Angie McHodgkins, Emily Vella, and Jenaya Webb. Much appreciation goes to my Inforum co-workers past and present: David Duncan, Rebecca Michaels, and Tamara Smith. I would also like to thank Glen Menzies and Kathleen O’Brien for their kind and willing support. With awe and admiration I thank Judith Majonis, my extraordinary fellow intern and bookworm. Thanks most of all to my incomparable supervisor, Kathleen Scheaffer, who managed to simultaneously push, challenge, guide, and entertain me all summer. As our advocate
and mentor, she made sure we were constantly engaged and on track, and helped us each customize our internships to meet our personal goals.