
Instructional Services Internship

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback on the internship and to reflect on my experiences. The internship was a very enriching experience and Deepak Chopra suggests that when reflecting we should focus on the following points:

1. Comment on what you observe or experience;
2. Describe how you felt about it;
3. Identify any unmet needs; and
4. Explain how unmet needs were met or how they can be fulfilled in the future.

The suggestions that I provide relate to my experience in the internship and focus on changes I might have made if I had to do it all over again. The second part of this report outlines the tasks or projects that I was engaged in during my internship and any related reflections.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Selection Process and Interviews

At the end of March I was notified by Nadia that internships would soon be posted on the FIS jobsite. I was eager to apply and get some academic library experience since I can foresee a future for myself in an academic setting. Once the postings were made public, a few students asked if the internships are meant for the Information Desk Assistants. At this time I became aware that as a desk assistant I was in a privileged position. I told the inquirers that everyone can apply and that the decision is not pre-made. I wonder if there are some students who would not apply believing that the Information Desk Assistants are given preference. I am not sure if this perception is strong but it is important to address it if it has an impact on the applicant pool. Perhaps the job postings could clarify this point when the jobs are advertised. To date, all four interns (Lisa Dauvin, Tasha Caswell, Lisa Page and I) have been information desk assistants at the Inforum prior to starting our internships. I have noted that the successful candidates for the 2008-2009 internships are not necessarily previous information desk assistants.

First Impressions

I began my internship in the first week of May 2007. My first impression of the internship was that it was an important to the Inforum since Joe had taken the time to meet with us and orient us with some general guidelines and personnel related paperwork. I also had a chance to meet with Nalini since she would be my supervisor during the year. I was eager to get started on projects or tasks; however, my initial days seemed very uncertain. I was unsure about what exactly I would be working on. I was given time to read some reports and articles. I thought this work was given to me because there was nothing else to be done. I recall feeling that I was not making contributions to the Inforum. Perhaps this revealed my eagerness to get started or, it may simply be a sign of my impatience? Anyhow, I just had to be patient because I was soon busy with multiple tasks and projects.

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Workroom Environment

Lisa and I were initially unsure about where we would be working. Initially, I would work in the open area of the Inforum. I found it difficult to focus when friends dropped by to say hello and chat because they did not realize that I was working. This situation was soon resolved when Tony installed a computer at the desk across from Edward’s. I was soon settled into my new space and appreciated having a ‘home’ in the Inforum. I was situated diagonally across from Nalini’s workstation. In the first few weeks I was very reticent and unwilling to approach Nalini. I was initially absorbed in my work with evaluation summaries and user feedback summaries so I did not consult her much. At times, I did have questions, but Nalini appeared busy and I felt like I might be disrupting her work. I also felt like having discussions in the workroom would be distracting for others. The workroom was very quiet at times; therefore, I preferred meeting with Nalini in the staff lunchroom. Once our regular meetings were established I was more comfortable discussing work with Nalini. This became a welcoming routine since I knew that our discussions would not be interrupted and that we had committed that time to discussing internship related tasks. I would suggest asking future interns about their preference. I didn’t realize this about myself- but I definitely prefer scheduled meetings over impromptu discussions. I felt that this was a space where we could both discuss ideas openly without other distractions. Towards the end of my internship I became more comfortable using Oracle effectively. For instance, I would use it to determine appropriate meeting times with Joe. Overall, I think that the Oracle training was helpful and should be scheduled as soon as possible so that interns can become accustomed to scheduling and using their calendars. After our training, I felt that I was so busy with other tasks that I did not start to adopt the scheduling system. I wished that I had thought to check Nalini’s schedule early on in the internship so that I could add meeting times and become familiar with using Oracle.

Communication

Communication is a delicate art. Sometimes we make assumptions and I found that there were a few misunderstandings about what I needed to do at the outset. For instance, I had started to explore other university library websites in order to get ideas for how we could structure our Captivate tutorials. I guess the first captivate file I worked on was not what Nalini had in mind. I soon realized that during our informal discussion we were sometimes discussing multiple ideas and when I returned to my tasks I was not sure about what decision had been made based on the discussions. After the initial misunderstanding I realized that I need to focus on decisions and need to take notes so that I can document the train of thought that led to a decision. I started to take notes during meetings with Nalini. Soon after the meeting was over, I made it a priority to write an email to Nalini summarizing the meeting and making a list of tasks that I would work on for the coming week. This was the single most helpful organizing task I did during my internship. Besides this, I refrained from sending email on the Inforum listserv since I felt it was sometimes overused. I wondered when I should use email to notify staff and when the communication binder would be more appropriate. I often relied on the latter. After Nalini left I had flexible schedules. But, in hindsight, I should have used Oracle to post when I would be in the office. I didn’t do so because unlike Lisa’s position, I was rarely sought after by faculty or students.

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Rapport with Staff and Involvement in Staff Meetings

The Inforum staff members are friendly, warm, caring, and always available to answer questions, provide technical assistance, and simply listen. It is easy to figure out why I enjoyed the internships so much—the countless hours spent at the Inforum were always pleasant and professionally rewarding. I knew that my work was valued and I appreciated the positive feedback and encouragement from Nalini and other staff members.

My only regret is that I did not spend more time understanding the roles of staff with whom I did not interact while doing my day-to-day tasks (i.e. Nadia and Marte). Although, I must admit Nadia did send some emails during the year explaining the project or tasks that she might be working on with Meera or Eliza. I appreciated being engaged with tasks relevant to my internship but sometimes felt that I was so absorbed in my work that it was isolating. In fact, everyone is engaged in their own work and as an intern you are not aware of other tasks or projects that are ongoing at the Inforum. As a result, I looked forward to staff meetings because I wanted to understand what other Inforum staff members were working on. I believe that it is important to include and involve the interns in the regular monthly staff meetings. If possible, I would have loved to attend the Tuesday morning Librarian and Senior Staff meetings as well. I was always acutely aware that Nalini had lots to discuss after these meetings and could only imagine what was discussed. Sometimes decisions were made there that might impact on interns work. If only I could have attended the librarian meetings! (Ha ha- can you sense the jealousy?)

If I could redesign the internship I might have asked to have some time shadowing certain staff members so that I could understand what they did on a daily basis. I realize that the internship was focused and brief but this could be built into quiet or less busy periods of the year (i.e. first few weeks of internship).

TASKS AND PROJECTS

Summaries for ILM 2006 and IIS Winter 2007

During the initial phase of my internship I was given a chance to summarize the evaluations from the previous set of workshops that were provided by the Inforum staff and librarians. I was given a quick introduction by Tasha and started using the template she provided with some modification. I started to compile the summaries for each instructor who taught the workshop. For instance, two different instructors may have taught separate sessions of a workshop on using the UTL catalogue. I thought this would be how the individual instructors are given feedback on their own sessions; therefore, they could relate to the comments and benefit from the suggestions. During one of my first follow up discussions with Nalini I realized that this was not the appropriate way to summarize. I then started to combine the comments and summarize the feedback from each workshop (irrespective of whether or not there were multiple instructors). In my opinion, it would be more effective to provide each instructor with a summary of their workshop evaluations. This may mean that we have two ILM02 workshop summaries if there were two instructors in a given year. I believe that aggregating the feedback lost its relevance.
and its ability to inform the instructor. Teaching can be improved if instructors receive specific and detailed information that relates to their own teaching practice.

**User Feedback Survey April 2007**

My report on the User Feedback Survey outlined the responses from students, staff or faculty. I learned a great deal about the experiences of Inforum users. The feedback was very positive in terms of the staff and services. However, there were also some recommendations for how the Inforum could improve. We presented findings during a Dean’s Tea in November. I was given the chance to present the findings while Nalini provided information on how the Inforum has addressed some needs. The one question that we did have to address during the Dean’s Tea was why the cash-to-card machines were not installed at the Inforum. This made me aware of the fact that sometimes older technology that needs replacement can curtail future developments. Since the current Robarts machines are due to be replaced with newer technology, it is delaying the implementation of the machines at FIS. Anyhow, I guess a quick walk to Robarts is not so bad. On another note, I was surprised that Museum Studies students did not ask about the backlog in cataloging for the Museum Studies resources.

It would be interesting to see any changes in the survey response in the next year or so. It would be great to design a survey tool that would be comparable over time and therefore changes could be measured in user satisfaction. Actually, I wonder why this survey was not repeated in April 2008. If there is a goal to redesign the survey, I wonder if an online tool (unlike the wiki) could be used. The study of FIS student perceptions by Nalini Singh, Joan Risk and Wendy Duff was conducted using an online survey tool.

**Information Literacy Quiz**

The information literacy (IL) quiz was one project that I was involved in from beginning to end. The purpose of the IL quiz was to inform librarians who were developing instructional workshop about the needs of incoming students. There were some concerns about the quiz and its usefulness. I believe that the existing self-assessments used in the package that is sent to incoming students is sufficient. I just wonder if an online tool can be established so that results can anonymously be shared with librarians so that they can better inform their practice. Pedagogically it is not sound to develop an IL program without assessment. In fact, before teaching anything there always needs to be some formal or informal assessment. I tend to begin sessions by asking some quick questions (i.e. Who has used Web of Science or is familiar with it?) But, in terms of a thorough assessment, I was interested in learning about areas that students may need our assistance. For instance, I did not know how to FTP files from the N drive to my home computer. This may not be taught during the Computing at FIS workshop but I hope that more guidance was provided. A guided tutorial on setting up your computer for FTP can easily be accessed by students from their home computers. There is no way for the librarians to address needs if they are assuming a certain skill set or assuming what is important for students to learn.
If I were to assess my efforts there are many areas for improvement. First, I believe that the coding of questions with ACRL's IL competencies was a good start. However, only two sections of the quiz were assessed to determine needs. The two sections corresponded with the skills taught in the indexes and catalogue workshops. Once the school year started, I did not return to summarize the IL quiz results.

Next, I felt that the process was well organized but the students had to come to FIS in order to take part in a paper-based quiz that was then followed by a lunch and follow-up discussion. I would have preferred an online quiz using software that allowed assessment. I recently contacted librarians in the U.S. to discussed Articulate, an e-learning software that is being used at the University of Arizona. The librarians are incorporating IL assessment into their English Composition classes and using the online assessments or tutorials to also provide instruction on the use of library resources.

**Captivate Tutorials**

Learning about e-learning software is the passion that I have picked up from this internship. I need to explore it further. This is all thanks to Nalini who suddenly invited me to attend an ILU sub-committee meeting one morning. This was early on in the internship and I was pleasantly surprised. The meeting was very interesting. We were introduced to three different software packages (Camtasia, Captivate and another open that I cannot recall). I found the presentation by Helen He (Dentistry Library) the most useful. I was convinced that Captivate was the greatest e-learning tool ever! I enjoyed its simplicity most of all. I appreciated the time that was taken to create and edit the tutorials that are now posted at [http://www.fis.utoronto.ca/content/view/1268](http://www.fis.utoronto.ca/content/view/1268). I did not realize that the work can be so time consuming. I have since realized that there is an entire industry that caters to e-learning technology. (This could really be a revolution in teaching! If only there was funding for computers on each desk top). Joe recently shared a link to [www.lanschool.com](http://www.lanschool.com) and I have mentioned [www.articulate.com](http://www.articulate.com) in another section of this report. I know that I will explore these programs in my further career.

**Instructional Learning Module (ILM)**

There were five ILM workshops offered over 35 sessions. The increase in sessions was due to increased enrolment at FIS. This series of workshops is the core or required set of workshops. Some concerns arose during the scheduling of the ILM workshops. For instance, those who were working full time found it difficult to schedule the workshops in the evenings. The space available was limited by the room size and computer availability. As a result they requested additional evening sessions. I believe that this can be resolved in multiple ways. Some academic libraries have started providing tutorials that are accessible 24/7. Students could be referred to the tutorials in lieu of workshops. This may not be a solution since workshops would cover more than a tutorial might. Another option is to provide online assessments that are linked to guided searches. The University of Arizona (UA) has an interactive tutorial that is used for its English Composition classes. They use a guide to the UA catalogue that allows students to click and search and then respond to questions that reveal if they have mastered certain skills. In my opinion, this type of embedded assessment would be useful for the Inforum as well. I am
not suggesting that we need a tutorial for catalogue searches. In fact, the two catalogue workshops could be combined into one. The tips and techniques that I found most useful in the cataloguing workshop were the use of LC subject headings and realizing that the catalogue contained records for the journal holdings.

I also believe that having a component about navigating the UTL website to find certain resources may be more useful than focusing on basic skills that students can pick up easily. The tabs for research resources and library services could be briefly explored. They sometimes have hidden gems of information.

**Inforum Instructional Series (IIS) Fall 2007 and Winter 2008**

In January Kathleen and I endeavoured to create a workshop and integrate it into the Research Methods course at FIS. I was excited about this opportunity since research indicates that library instruction is most relevant and most valuable when it is linked to specific assignments within a course or research papers. What was surprising was that not both professors were going to provide the same type of experience for students. One professor decided to include the workshop during the second half of a scheduled class. Another provided time for students to attend the workshop while meetings were scheduled with groups of students. My impression of this was that if class time was devoted and if the instructor was present, students were more likely to attend the session. How can we assess the Research Methods workshop? I would say that the skills taught were relevant to students who were working on completing a literature review for their research proposal. For instance, I may have taught Web of Science search techniques but if the students did not have a particular topic in mind they may not be able to immediately apply search strategies to their topic and they may not have any questions because they are not applying what they had learned in the workshop. This would make an interesting research study.

The workshops evaluations were mostly positive but some students felt that the Boolean search strategies were over emphasised. The portion Kathleen taught on ERIC was requested by Joan Risk. I am not sure about the reason for this. I was hoping a more interdisciplinary database would have been selected. I had been asked to present Scopus or Web of Science. Kathleen and I met a number of times to try and discuss the best option. Both of the indexes had cited reference searching but Kathleen preferred to use Scopus due to familiarity. I started to work with Scopus but suddenly we decided to demo Web of Science since it had a wider scope (arts & humanities, science and technology, & social sciences).

**Museum Studies Resources**

In January I realized that the Museum Studies workshop that I was scheduled to deliver would be easier if I could point to a list of resources in the drop down menu on the UTL homepage. However, the museum studies section was blank. I contacted UTL staff and with their permission started to prepare a guide. I was asked to send the guide along to them when it was completed. I recently spoke to Nalini

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and learned that there was an existing guide on the website. I am not sure where it is located but it certainly would have eased my workload. I spent a great deal of time annotating the sources with Tasha’s help and input. Tasha also delivered a workshop on writing for the web which was useful. I have enjoyed pairing up with Tasha on projects that have an online component. Tasha has posted the guide online at http://www.fis.utoronto.ca/content/view/1312/134/. Nalini will be contacting the UTL staff member who created the other Museum Studies guide and continue to update it. Thanks!

**Supervision and Mentorship**

Nalini has always showed confidence in my abilities. I could not have wished for a better working relationship. Her feedback was constructive or sensitively communicated. It took some time to adapt to our different styles. Nalini is informal and friendly while I can be formal and reserved. I like to have scheduled meetings to discuss work related issues or questions in private. I noticed that I also needed to write during meetings because there was a great deal discussed during our meetings and I was prone to forget what the ultimate decision or course of action was. My practice of emailing meeting minutes to Nalini and confirming my list of tasks seemed to resolve this issue. As a visual learner, I appreciated Nalini’s efforts to create mental maps when appropriate (e.g. to understand the difference between indexes and databases). When scheduling the ILM workshops, I also found the large calendar and explanation of the process useful. I think the process was explained just to make me aware. Is it possible that I was expected to schedule the workshops? Once Nalini left for her leave of absence, I missed the flowers, the warm hello she extended everyday and her input on my work. I also missed our weekly meetings. But, once February arrived my thesis writing took on a sudden urgency and all else seemed to be forgotten. I had a goal to graduate in June with my friends and colleagues at FIS. On a positive note, the leave also gave me the chance to work with Kathleen and Joe. Kathleen’s confidence during staff meetings and ability to speak about almost any subject with others was always refreshing. Kathleen has been a wonderful friend during the last months of the internship. In fact, each of the staff shared in my ups and downs this year. Meera was always willing to modify the schedule based on my needs. Eliza was a dependable friend. Marte was willing to open the Inforum on mornings when I was in traffic or stuck in a rain/snow storm. Tony is the tech guru. Joe was always willing to give advice and mentor me professionally. I hope to keep in touch with each of them as return to the working world.

**Value of Internship**

How can you measure the value of an experience that opens doors and leads to greater possibilities? I cannot measure the value of this internship but do know that it will always be my first experience as a professional librarian. Though I was not finished my course work at the Faculty of Information Studies, I certainly gained the experience of an instructional services librarian. This may be the most important step I could have taken to transition into academic librarianship. I have had a number of interviews in U.S. libraries and at the McMaster Health Sciences Library as a result of this internship. I also received a scholarship from the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) Initiative to Recruit a Diverse Workforce. I also had my proposal to present a workshop on using Captivate at WILU accepted (although I declined

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since my thesis was a big priority at the time). These would not have been possible had it not been for the internship experience. I hope that the Faculty of Information continues to invest in the internship experience that the Inforum provides. It is an invaluable staff development initiative since the staff and students exchange ideas and learn from one another. In terms of providing learning, career development, and mentorship opportunities, FIS is setting a great example by providing student internships at the Inforum.