

LIS 526 Practicum

Semester: Summer III

Intern: Aneliya Kochneva

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Dagobert Soergel- Professor and Chair, Department of Library and Information Studies, Graduate School of Education, University at Buffalo

Library: Clifton Park- Halfmoon Library, 475 Moe Rd, Clifton Park 12065

Supervisor: Kathy Adam- Assistant Director Public Services, Clifton Park-Halfmoon Library, Clifton Park.

Internship report

1. Internship experience

Projects and status update

Table 1

Project	Status
400 Collection - weeding and collection development	Complete
Reference collection weeding	Complete
Reference desk inquiry	Complete
Booklet structure and design	Ongoing (my part complete)
Local History archival work (transferring of tapes in digital format, notes and worksheets)	Ongoing
900 Collection - weeding	Complete
Reference desk assistance	Complete
Children's department assistance	Complete
Circulation desk assistance	Complete
Dream Big Summer Reading club (outreach program)	Complete
Program assistance	Ongoing
Clerical duties (printing, scanning, copying etc.)	Ongoing

2. Internship observations

2.1 Interactions

During my short but intensive work at the CPH Library I have observed the day to day operations and some of the big ongoing projects at the library. My first impression was of the library resembling a big and well maintained machine at work. Every employee knew exactly where they are supposed to be and what they are supposed to do without constant supervision. Sometimes people will meet their colleagues only at the end of the day, because they all are working on different projects in different departments. I would have guessed that this might affect the communication between the different parts of the system, but tasks were always finished in a timely manner and people were cooperating on one of the highest levels I have ever seen in my work experience. Interactive online communication was part of the routing at the CPH Library.

2.2 Staff

All my interactions with the staff at the library were extremely friendly. The employees were welcoming and accommodating, knowledgeable and helpful to the highest degree, as the work environment was professional and cordial.

Just as an illustration I would like to share my experiences with the staff when I encountered a problem, related to my work as an intern.

In the process of developing one of the projects I was working on I felt lack of confidence in my weeding knowledge and skills, since this is not something we have addressed in particular in our studies at University of Buffalo. I shared my concerns with the librarians in the Adult Services department and the attention and help I have received in response were exceptional. The librarians provided me with:

- Advice on particular titles that I had concerns about
- Additional information on weeding processes, both as personal experience and as printed resource information (including booklets from a conference attended by one of the librarians, which proved to be really helpful.)

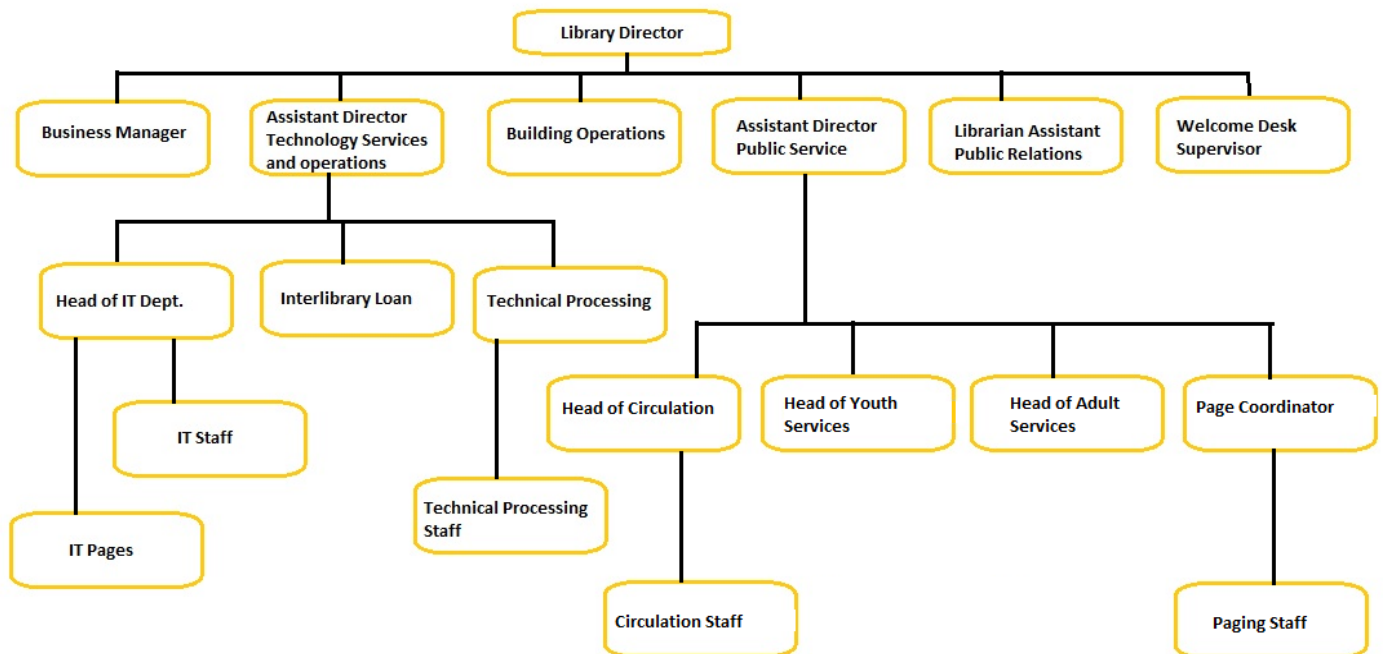
- Core collection development literature that helped me determine the value to the collection of particular titles with low circulation record.
- Moral support that helped me to confidently approach the task even though I lacked the experience to do so.

2.3 Administration

During my work at CPHL I interacted with different administrative levels because the nature of the internship required me to work at different departments, but at all times I was under the supervision of Kathy Adam, the Assistant Director Public Service. I experienced the work flow in Circulation and Reference department, Adult and Children Services, Local History and PR department.

The organizational structure of the library can be seen on the following chart:

Organizational Chart Clifton Park -Halfmoon Library



2.4 Patrons

Throughout the internship my interactions with patrons were limited to the assistance I provided when I was at the reference desk. On a couple of occasions I have assisted patrons in the Local History department as well. In my 400 Collection report I made a profile of the population using the library, as the general conclusion was that the library serves mainly high income community with a diverse cultural background.

2.5 Policies

During my internship I acquainted myself with the library's policies through the information that was available to the public on the library's website (available at: <http://www.cphlibrary.org/about/index.shtml>). Because of my personal interest, connected with the fact that one of my projects last semester was Collection Development and we had to create a Collection Development Policy, I extensively reviewed the library's existing policies (available at: <http://www.cphlibrary.org/about/policies.shtml>)

3. Internship evaluation

3.1 Learning experience

One of my main concerns when I started the MLS program was the fact that I am one of the few students in the program not currently involved with work in a library. Because of my work schedule, as well as my student duties, I am not able to volunteer in a library as before I started my education.

Although my educational experience so far proved me wrong to a degree, I still felt in certain situations that if I had the opportunity to use some of the skills, and to apply some of the knowledge I have gained in my course of education, I would have benefited more from the MLS program. That was the main reason I sought the opportunity to complete an internship and I feel that this completed a cycle for me. All the knowledge and experiences I had in classes during the last 2 semesters came together in unison, forming a better understanding and more practical application skills in me. I truly believe that this has been an invaluable and irreplaceable experience for me, and would highly recommend other students who have the same concerns

about experience and practical application as me, to follow the same path. Theoretical knowledge is definitely useful and it is mandatory in my mind to possess it, however experience comes with practical application and there is only one way to get that – through doing.

3.2 Future application of knowledge and experience gained through the internship

- Weeding and Collection development

One of the aspects that I have gained the most experience while I was at the library was definitely the process of evaluating, weeding and collection development. The knowledge I have gained from the Collection Development class just before I took my internship proved invaluable in my work, however it was not enough. The practical experience that I received with the guidance and help of the librarians I worked with brought my understanding of the process to a different level. Until then, my romantic notion of the library was a place that “acquires and gives access”, which is definitely true, but somehow I overlooked the “less pleasant” topic of weeding and what actually happens with the books that have low circulation record, the books that are obsolete, damaged, or the books that there is simply no shelf/storage space for. I have to admit that I was very intimidated by the prospect of working on a weeding project and once I understood this is going to be one of the first projects I am going to work on, I didn’t feel as confident as before that I am up to the task.

As with everything in life, not knowing or understanding something in detail might make us feel intimidated, fearful, discriminating or resentful and the only thing that will remedy the situation is gaining knowledge and understanding.

“Books and ideas are the most effective weapons against intolerance and ignorance”, as Lyndon Baines Johnson said. I followed the advice and I read everything I could find on weeding. It certainly helped with understanding the need of the process and the general guidelines, but I still felt like I was missing something. I shared my concerns with the staff and everyone helped me with advice, guidance and encouragement. I realized that:

- First, I expected perfect results from myself the very first time I had a weeding attempt
- Second, I needed to get over my self-doubt and actually do some weeding, to gain the experience I needed to make the right choices.

After all, my weeding project was overlooked by more experienced librarians; the worst thing that could happen was to have to put back on the shelf some of the titles I pulled out.

In reality, once I got over my fear of failure in the weeding area, I actually quite liked the process. I liked how I was supposed to evaluate the books first, to understand their value to the collection, and then to decide if they should be kept or not. Of course, the even more pleasurable process was to recommend titles for purchasing to develop the collection even further.

- Public Relations

I have a background in Public Relations; therefore I was very pleased to find out that part of my internship will include spending a day with the Public person at the library. Public relations in general is such a broad field with so many nooks and crannies depending on the particular situation and people involved and I realize Library Public Relations will be completely different than corporate Public Relations for example. That made me even more curious to get to know what that kind of work in the library involves.

It turned out that the “live organism” of the library needs constant attention on the PR department side. From simply creating advertising materials, maintaining display information, programs, maintaining connections and relationships with organizations and community leaders, and in all everything that would bring out a positive image of the library for the community.

I helped the PR person by summarizing information she needed to put in a booklet, representing the library, using all the existing library advertising materials. Consequently, I created a digital design in Microsoft Publisher to contain the already structured information by me. This was an ongoing project and was not completed with my assistance, but there were no such expectations at the time. However, my help moved the project forward and my help was appreciated. I personally gained understanding of the processes and skills a Public Relations individual has to possess to work in a library.

- Archival work

I had absolutely no experience with archival work before I started working on this project, but it proved to be extremely interesting and rewarding task. One of my favorite parts of the internship was working in the Local History department, where I learned the basics of archival work and more specifically digital preservation. I realized that this is an area I could see myself thrive;

therefore I have been entertaining the options of acquiring more knowledge in that area and maybe look for opportunities to practically apply that knowledge.

I also learned a lot about the local history of the place I live now. It is interesting how I spend my past 6 years in this area, but I never had the time to learn more about its history until I started working on this project. Being born in a different country I really appreciate the insight I gained in the history of the place I live now, because of this project. I met very interesting people and even did some genealogy sleuthing in the process. Overall, I qualify my experience as a truly rewarding in this area.

- Library Programming

Helping with the organization, set up and running of library programs was a very rewarding experience in a sense that it was completely different from the other kind of work I performed during the internship, it was interesting and of course entertaining at times.

I helped with the Adult E-reader classes, where we promoted the use of the e-readers the library has, as well as the digital services the library offers. Setting up an account for a patron and helping them check out an e-book for the first time on their device was a wonderful feeling of accomplishment. We really made a difference in these people's lives, opened a whole new world of possibilities in front of them. Some of the people that attended the meetings had the devices for months and they had never used them, because they didn't know how. It was empowering to see how you can change somebody's life by giving them the opportunity to experience the digital book world.

I also helped promote and set up a couple of entertainment events- a concert and improvisation group's play. I also helped with the set-up of the annual Blood drive, which was an interesting experience as well.

These experiences gave me the opportunity to interact more with the patrons and gain understanding of the various facets of the librarian's work.

- Reference and circulation

My experience in Reference Department was mainly observing the workflow and interactions of the librarians, asking questions and sometimes even helping patrons myself. I already had some experience at a reference desk, so the concept of the work was not new to me, however each

library is different, with its own structure, organization, requirements and policies. It was useful to me to become familiar with the way the reference service at this particular library was organized and compare it to my knowledge of the same service offered at the library where I volunteered. Both systems were good and got the job done, none was better or worse, they are just different.

In the Circulation Department I assisted with shelving, organizing and alphabetizing the books. I also learned to process books on hold. I already had experience with circulation processing and I believe my help was welcome and appreciated.

- Outreach programs and work with children

Before I started my internship I had no experience with outreach programs and I when I was given the opportunity to participate in this one I was very eager to do it. The Dream Big Reading Program was organized in a community center at a trailer park and was mainly aimed to fulfill the reading needs of the children living in the gated community for the summer.

Many of the children had nobody to read to them or did not own books; most of them were below their expected reading level (according to age/grade). The reading program provided free books for the children to take home, supervised reading, art and craft projects, games promoting literacy, and of course snack. Without a doubt, this program is one of the most memorable experiences for me from the internship. I appreciated every minute of it. The children were wonderful, eager to learn and I felt very fortunate to have the opportunity to interact with them even for this limited time of 7 weeks. Each week I learned something new from them and I just hope they enjoyed my company as much as I did theirs.

From my work with these children I took humility, compassion and better understanding of the needs of children in disadvantaged situation, and what role the librarian can play in helping them achieve their potential.

4. Attachments

- 4.1 CPH Library Internship hours/projects (Excel file)
- 4.2 CPH Library Reference weeding list (Word file)
- 4.3 CPH Library 400 Collection report (Word file)

4.4 CPH Library 900 Collection report (Word file)

4.5 CPH Library 900 Collection weeding list (Word file)

4.6 CPH Library Booklet Structure (Word file)

4.7 CPH Library Booklet template (Publisher file)

Note: Unfortunately, I cannot provide access to any of the files I worked on for the Local History project. They are property of the library and Local History collection.

5. Conclusion –

Over the course of my school work I have asked myself time and again if I would have gained more from learning the theoretical part of librarianship in University of Buffalo if I had the practical experience of it. At the end of the spring semester I was quite sure that it will be in my interest to take an internship with a library or information agency and gain some practical experience.

I am glad that I did, because now that I have finished my internship in the Clifton park-Halfmoon Library I realize that my understanding of the material I have already learned has deepened to a level I would have never been able to achieve with only theoretical knowledge of the subject.

Being able to immerse myself into the way a large library as CPHL functions and understand the structure and responsibilities of the staff was an invaluable experience for me. I was extremely fortunate to have this experience in a highly professional and friendly environment and the educational as well as professional benefits I have gained through it are unquestionably of a much higher degree than I expected initially. I was sure that the whole experience will be a positive one and I would gain appreciation for the profession but I never anticipated the knowledge and confidence I will be able to acquire as well.

In my opinion, if a person is not already involved in a library institution of some kind when going through graduate school for MLS, they should be required to have an internship at some point during their education. I am glad that I had the support of the faculty in this endeavor, and I am grateful to the administration and staff in CPHL for providing this opportunity for me.

6. Testimonials

“Dr. Dagobert Soergel,

I wanted to express my pleasure working with Aneliya (Annie) during these last few weeks. Annie is highly motivated, energetic and capable library intern. I feel she will do well in the library world once she graduates.

I am in charge of public relations and marketing at Clifton Park-Halfmoon Public Library. Annie assisted in organizing information from various documents we hand out to the public about the library, it's programs and services. My hope is to create one document to encompass all this basic information to use in Outreach events, give to new patrons and community partners. This is a long-term project and was not meant to be completed. I needed someone without knowledge of library, with great organizational skills to tackle this problem.

She accomplished this preliminary task wonderfully.

Annie was a delight to work with and had a lot of great ideas for this project.

Ann Cocca

Ann Cocca

Librarian Assistant

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Clifton Park, NY 12065

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acocca@sals.edu”

“August 8, 2012

To Whom It May Concern:

It was a pleasure to work with Annie Kochneva over the summer of 2012 during her internship at the Clifton Park – Halfmoon Public Library. Annie acted as my assistant at a Library sponsored summer reading club outreach for children entering grades K-6 in the fall. The program was held once a week for five weeks at Cheryl’s Lodge in the town of Halfmoon. The children participating in this program are economically disadvantaged and many also struggle with learning disabilities. Annie was sensitive and professional at all times. The children quickly learned to trust her and willingly talked to her about the reading they had done (either by themselves or by listening to others read). She also set up and assisted with craft projects, games, and other planned activities each week.

Annie was an excellent assistant. She was always early, anticipated needs and worked independently. And though her internship was technically completed, she finished the program with me for two weeks in August. This meant that I did not have to find someone to replace her, and, more importantly, maintained a sense of continuity and security for the children. I highly commend her work and recommend her for any position for which she may apply.

Very truly yours,

Lucinda J. Robertson, Librarian

Clifton Park – Halfmoon Public Library....”

“.....Dr. Dagobert Soergel.

It was a truly rewarding experience to have Annie Kochneva participate in a graduate internship with us at the Clifton Park-Halfmoon Public Library.

From the moment Annie walked into my office I was impressed with her intelligence, her professionalism and her engaging personality. Any staff members who worked with her or merely met her casually, were also impressed.

In addition to providing support to several departments within our organization, Annie completed several assignments for me. She reviewed several areas of the collection and made

thoughtful suggestions as to what should be retained or weeded. She also provided a very thorough report as to what might be purchased to enhance the collection.

Annie's personality and her ability to work well with both staff and the public are perhaps her greatest asset for working in the public library setting.

Her customer service skills are excellent and are a key component, I believe, to having a successful library career.

When Annie has completed her graduate program, she would be an excellent addition to any library looking for a hard-working, well-educated, compassionate individual to join their staff.

Kathy Adam

Assistant Director for Public Service

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kadam@sals.edu.....”

“.....Dr. Soergel,

I'm writing to give you some feedback on Aneliya's work for us during her internship. My duties here include overseeing the Local History Room. We've been working on a project to digitize and create metadata for a collection of oral history cassette tapes. Annie took over the project with a minimum of direction and did a wonderful job. She is very professional, capable, and did a great job, above and beyond expectations. She is also a pleasure to work with, and was eager to jump in and help with anything that was asked of her. We will miss her!

Please let me know if you have any further questions.

Thank you,

Lauren

Lauren Cardinal

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