

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Internship

What's in a Name?

Rumi Graham, Emma Scott, and Marissa Rocca

At the outset of our study discussed in Chapter 6, we regarded *internship* to be a work opportunity for an LIS graduate student at the University of Lethbridge Library and *intern* to be a student participant in such an opportunity, as these are terms our library has been accustomed to using for some time. In perusing the professional literature, however, we quickly encountered a need to clarify the meaning and scope of *internship*, as there appears to be wide variance in how it is defined.

We find it useful to consider the concept of *internship* within the broader landscape of hands-on workplace-situated education that has been variously labeled *experiential learning*, *field experience*, *structured workplace learning*, and *practice-based learning*.¹ While terminology in common usage within the field has shifted over time, in general, an enduring idea is that LIS graduate students' workplace-situated learning is structured and supervised.

Rothstein understood practice work to encompass classroom demonstrations, laboratory work, projects, and field work to involve learning in locations “where the student is detached from the class to do actual work in a library.”² He identified field work as the focus of his 1968 paper, as do we in this chapter. Viewing it as a complementary component to theory, Rothstein suggested practice work in LIS is roughly comparable to clinical experience in the education and training programs of medical and other health professions.³

Among LIS schools, internship is sometimes conceived as a form of field-work called *practicum*, although this term, too, is variously defined. Witucke understood practicum broadly as “library experience sponsored by the library as part of its instruction,”⁴ whereas Monroe defined it more precisely: “relatively short-term work experience (two to six weeks of full-time employment in a library situation, or a semester or two of approximately 10 to 12 hours weekly).”⁵ Finding that “a bewildering array of titles exist for the practicum,” Coleman used the term to cover all practical experiences such as field experience, field-work, and internship.⁶ Among others who have adopted a similar approach are Ball, McGurr and Damasco, Ferrer-Vinent and Sobel, and Bird and Crumpton.⁷

Differing views on LIS internship characteristics also abound. Grotzinger considered internship to be a form of practicum that is longer than four

months.⁸ Witucke defined internship as “supervised library experience at a professional level following completion of library school course work; comparable to a medical internship, with a systematic plan for library experience. Stipend.”⁹ Similarly, Dotson saw internship as library-situated learning that is additional to LIS coursework and takes place under the direction of a qualified librarian for a set number of hours.¹⁰ Monroe distinguished between “post-degree internships that follow professional study” and “pre-masters internships” involving full-time work typically timed to occur after all coursework is completed and lasting several months to a year.¹¹

Other considerations are relevant beyond timing, duration, and whether remuneration is offered. Bird and Crumpton contrasted credit-bearing internships and practicums with extracurricular part-time work, observing that the degree to which all stakeholders are actively involved in an internship can vary.¹² A study by McGurr and Damasco noted the scope and meaningfulness of work assigned to LIS interns may not always be optimal.¹³ A survey of international LIS education programs by Bird, Chu, and Oguz showed that, unlike ALA-accredited schools, the majority of master’s level programs in respondents’ countries required an internship.¹⁴ Their study also found that, globally, virtual LIS internships are rarely permitted.

Additional terms in the LIS literature denoting concepts similar or related to internship include “trainee programs and work-study programs” described by Monroe as “usually involv[ing] paid employment at a sub-professional level and requir[ing] activities selected to serve the needs of the library rather than serving the learning needs of the students.”¹⁵ *Co-operative education program* (*co-op*) is another term for library-situated learning preferred by some institutions.¹⁶

Internship is now often discussed as an example of *work-integrated learning* (WIL), with key aspects mirroring those of earlier conceptions of fieldwork and practicum. WIL is generally understood to be an educational program component comprising workplace-situated experiential learning that complements or is integrated with in-class study.¹⁷ Observing that WIL is both “nothing new” and “a uniquely 21st century phenomenon and public policy response to the transformative power of ICTs [information and communications technologies],” Stevenson and Hannaford described a new WIL program offering opportunities for LIS students to intern for two years in one of the University of Toronto’s libraries.¹⁸

To summarize, internships are infrequently a required element of Canadian and American LIS graduate programs today. Internships vary widely along many dimensions, such as when they are offered, their duration, if they are credit-bearing, whether interns are paid, the type and quality of assigned work, if they take place alongside or after traditional coursework, if they involve full-

or part-time work, whether a virtual format is permitted, and the extent to which stakeholders at LIS schools and host libraries are active participants.

Notes

1. Margaret E. Monroe, "Issues in Field Experience as an Element in the Library School Curriculum," *Journal of Education for Librarianship* 22, no. 1/2 (1981), 57–73, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40322681>; Norman Howden, "Practicums and Field Experiences," *Journal of Library Administration* 16, no. 1–2 (1992), 123–40, https://doi.org/10.1300/J111V16N01_12; David Guile and Ann Lahiff, *Internship* (London, UK: University of London Institute of Education, 2013), https://www.srhe.ac.uk/downloads/events/114_Internship.pdf (page discontinued); Sujin Huggins, "Practice-Based Learning in LIS Education: An Overview of Current Trends," *Library Trends* 66, no. 1 (2017), 13–22, <https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2017.0025>.
2. Samuel Rothstein, "A Forgotten Issue: Practice Work in American Library Education," *Reference Librarian* 11, no. 25/26 (1990): 200, https://doi.org/10.1300/j120v11n25_08.
3. Rothstein, "Forgotten Issue," 201.
4. A. Virginia Witucke, "The Place of Library Experience in Library Education: Trends and Current Status," *Journal of Education for Librarianship* 22, no. 1/2 (1981): 74, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40322682>.
5. Monroe, "Issues in Field Experience," 58.
6. J. Gordon Coleman Jr., "The Role of the Practicum in Library Schools," *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* 30, no. 1 (1989): 22, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40323496>.
7. Mary Alice Ball, "Practicums and Service Learning in LIS Education," *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* 49, no. 1 (2008): 70–82, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40323787>; Melanie J. McGurr and Ione T. Damasco, "Improving the Practicum or Internship Experience in Cataloging," *Technical Services Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (2010): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07317130802679041>; Ignacio J. Ferrer-Vinent and Karen Sobel, "A Study of Master of Library Science Candidates and Librarians at a Practicum Site Library," *New Library World* 112, no. 7/8 (2011): 365–76, <https://doi.org/10.1108/03074801111150486>; Nora J. Bird and Michael A. Crumpton, "Real Learning Connections: Questioning the Learner in the LIS Internship," *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* 55, no. 2 (2014): 89–99, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1074307.pdf>.
8. Laurel Grotzinger, "The Status of 'Practicum' in Graduate Library Schools," *Journal of Education for Librarianship* 11, no. 4 (1971): 335, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40322142>.
9. Witucke, "Place of Library Experience in Library Education," 75.
10. Kaye Bennett Dotson, "A Praxis of Leadership Development: The Library Internship Experience" (EdD diss., East Carolina University, 2007), 3, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 3283392.
11. Monroe, "Issues in Field Experience," 57–58.
12. Bird and Crumpton, "Real Learning Connections," 90, 97.
13. McGurr and Damasco, "Improving the Practicum," 13.
14. Nora J. Bird, Clara M. Chu, and Fatih Oguz, "Internship in LIS Education: An International Perspective on Experiential Learning," *IFLA Journal* 41, no. 4 (2015): 298–307, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0340035215596352>.
15. Monroe, "Issues in Field Experience," 58.
16. Heather Saunders, "What Are Our Prospects?," *Access* 13, no. 1 (Fall 2006): 42–43, http://accessola2.com/images/infocentral/access13_1.pdf; Bird, Chu, and Oguz, "Internship in LIS Education."
17. Siobhan Stevenson and Julie Hannaford, "Workplace-Integrated-Learning: Preparing Tomorrow's Academic Library Workforce," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 45, no. 3 (2019): 234–41, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2019.03.001>; Rosalie Wyonch, *Work-Ready Graduates* (Toronto, ON: C. D. Howe Institute, January 2020), <https://www.cdhowe.org/public-policy-research/work-ready-graduates-role-co-op-programs-labour-market-success>; Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada, "Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) Definitions," CEWIL Canada, accessed June 17, 2020, https://www.cewilcanada.ca/What_is_WIL_.html (page discontinued).
18. Stevenson and Hannaford, "Workplace-Integrated-Learning," 235.

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