Library Internship: A Key to the Development of Sustainable Professional Competence

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A VISION FOR LIS EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

Obtaining a professional position in the field requires real world experience. Theoretical facets form the backbone, but exposure to real-life situations need not be ignored. 'Sustainable professional competencies' warrant for the continued education and training of the LIS professionals in general and the new entrants in particular. This paper discusses the prospects of the Library Internship Training and thereby advocates for its integration in the LIS curricula. It reveals that, there is much to gain from the Library Internship.

Library internship

An internship is an individualized training program that combines learning new library skills outside the classroom and the demonstration of those skills according to a planned schedule of activities. An intern works with an advisor/supervisor selected for the purpose to develop a practical training program on a particular aspect of librarianship.

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**Purpose of an internship**

Any library internship training serves the purpose of both - the intern as well as the host library/institution. It is supposed to add value to both the parties. Those purposes may be elaborated as below:

- To increase the knowledge and skills of recent graduates;
- To upgrade their skills in a specific area of information service;
- To train them in order to boost their efficiency for crucial department/section;
- To equip them with necessary skills and competencies;
- To provide the education and training necessary to initiate a new project;
- To train them to adopt to the existing working conditions in the home library,
- To suffice the manpower requirements of the library;
- To prepare them for future job responsibilities;
- To get them good remarks/grades for the certification

**Objectives**

A well planned library internship program will successfully meet the following objectives:-

1. Further develop and solidify knowledge, skill, and self-awareness relevant to the provision of individual psychotherapy.
2. Achieve greater sophistication in integrating theoretical knowledge with specific information needs.
3. Achieve greater sophistication in utilizing theoretical knowledge acquired during the graduation.
4. Further acquire and solidify knowledge and skills in providing information services.
5. Further acquire and solidify knowledge and skills in professional communication.
6. Further develop ability to apply ethical and professional standards to the provision of information services and negotiating professional relationships.
7. Recognize **ethical issues and dilemmas**, and make sound ethical judgments
8. Maintain appropriate professional boundaries and respectful relationships with users, colleagues, staff, supervisors, fellow trainees, etc.
9. Learn to demonstrate a sense of professional responsibility to users, colleagues, staff, fellow trainees, and others as a whole.
10. Further develop competency in multicultural and diversity awareness in information practice.
11. Further develop skill in communicating verbally and in writing (efficiency, clarity, quality, accuracy)
12. Begin to solidify a 'professional identity' that is consistent with one's own personal sense of self, values, strengths, and limitations, and professional interests.

**Indicative skills, qualifications and competencies:**

Before joining any library internship program a candidate is expected to possess some basic skills, qualifications and competencies. This makes the task easy on the part of the trainer library and the quality is also assured as well.

**Skills:** The skills required for an internship program may vary from organization to organization, the few basic skills to expect are:

- Strong skills in research methodologies and library resources
- Ability to work well with a diverse patronage.
- Good interpersonal skills and successfully demonstrated oral and written communication skills.
- Knowledge of computer services including on-line searching and Library databases.

**Qualifications:** Library internship may be open for the fresh graduates, recent graduates or even the library staff members. So, any person who has completed his/her professional degree -graduate or post-graduate level will be eligible depending on the requirement of the hiring institution/organization. A library staff member or anyone holding a Certificate/Diploma
may also take an internship. The library should make its policy very clear in this regard.

**Competencies:** Competencies sans the professional now is at par. The general competencies expected in an internship candidate would be:-
- Communication,
- Teamwork,
- Creativity,
- Respect for Diversity or Multi-culture Environment,
- Leadership qualities, and
- Commitment to Continuous Learning etc...

**Categories of internship**

The internship may fall in either of the below mentioned categories:
- 'paid' or 'un-paid';
- 'ad-hoc' or 'for the particular period' like 'summer internship';
- 'open for all' or 'restricted' to the graduates of a particular school;
- 'placement assured' or 'without any such assurance';
- 'learning by doing' or 'train and gain', etc.

**Supervision of the interns**

The interns have to be monitored and mentored. For this, the advisor, or supervisor, is critical to the success of this type of learning experience. The internship advisor/supervisor should have experience in the area of interest, should have an academic degree in library or information science, and should be willing to serve as a guide to the intern.

They have to work with interns to develop clear and specific training plans that meet the needs of the interns. Advisors/supervisors may conduct training themselves or supervise the training provided by other members of the staff. They may only need to provide consultation to the interns whenever necessary.
Advantages of library internship

Library Internship provides several advantages such as:

1. Provides experience to recent graduates interested in exploring a career in academic libraries;
2. Provides an opportunity to discover the multitude of opportunities within an academic library setting;
3. Creates mentoring and networking opportunities for recent graduates as well as provide for professional development and training;
4. Internship training can be customized to meet a candidate's unique requirements regarding time, travel, and interests;
5. An internship allows a recent graduate to put his knowledge to work;
6. Enables the participant to benefit from the insights of a librarian who is professionally trained and experienced in some specialty of interest;
7. Fosters closer cooperation between staff members of neighboring libraries;
8. It also saves on the staff salaries for the host Library;
9. Provides a chance to apply the skills learned in Library School and learn new ones;
10. Enables to network with professional librarians;
11. Saves huge amount of money for the host library/institution;
12. Manpower burdens of the host library/institution are reduced;
13. Provides opportunities for the intern to engage in outreach and consultation activities;
14. Helps the intern to discover his/her own individual styles and approaches that are consistent with the sense of self, values, strengths, and interests.

Areas of internship training

Depending upon its nature, an internship can be conducted at the institute's main library, or the departmental libraries. However, training at larger libraries is recommended. The internship maybe general or specific in its area of operation.
The areas of internship training can be categorically announced well before it begins. They may be general or specific. Some of the areas worth to mention are:

i. Circulation Intern
ii. Reference Services Intern
iii. Catalogue Intern
iv. Special Collection Intern
v. Manuscript Intern
vi. Digital Library Intern
vii. Serials Library Intern
viii. Library Acquisitions Intern
ix. Children's Collections Intern
x. Knowledge Management Intern
xi. Audio-Visual Collection Intern
xii. Information Services Intern
xiii. KM (Info. & Knowledge Management) Intern
xiv. Disability Services Intern etc.

**Planning A Better Library Internship Programme**

Planning for an internship begins when a library staff member and the Head of the library discuss the needs of that staff member for future education and training.

The well-planned internship prepares the intern for future job responsibilities. It should be related to the needs of the library as a whole and to the needs of the intern in particular. The internship should be a step in the logical progression of continuing education for the candidate.

To put it in right perspective, this planning of the Internship program comprises the components mentioned below:

a) Educational Requirements,
b) Pre-Internship skills, aptitude etc.,
c) Duty Hours/Timings,
d) Location,
e) Duration,
f) Nature of the internship,
g) Sponsorship from the Teaching Department/Other Library,
h) Goals of the Library
i) Number of Interns,
j) Number of internships,
k) Stipend/Remuneration if any,
l) Adviser/Supervisor,
m) Areas of Training,
n) Leave and other facilities,
o) Cost of an internship,
p) Evaluation Criteria,
q) Terms and conditions,
r) Certification,
s) Placements if any,

The final plan for the internship should be drafted out neatly in writing, with copies provided to the intern, and the advisor/supervisor. It is also advisable to have an approved internship policy.

Evaluation of the internship

Evaluation of the library internship program is to make out whether the set objectives have been achieved, whether the intern possesses the expected training outcomes and many more such issues which help in providing grades or certification and also to suggest further improvements if any.

Some of the components associated with the evaluation of internship maybe summarized as below:

1. Attendance:
   • Following the schedule and absenteeism.
   • Timings of arriving and leaving.

2. Professionalism (dress, conduct, manner):
   • Presented a professional manner with the other librarians
   • Presented a professional manner with patrons.
3. Abilities:
   • Showed ability to get along with others in a team environment.
   • Showed ability and willingness to learn new things and/or to be corrected.

4. Job preparedness:
   • Possessed fundamental understanding of librarianship applicable to internship.
   • Possessed basic skills and knowledge needed for the duties and responsibilities of the internship.

5. Experience:
   • Seemed to gain much from this internship.
   • Made a noticeable contribution to the department.

6. Student Progress:
   • Has learned significantly through this internship/improved since the last evaluation.
   • Can be recommended for further internships and responsibilities.

7. Continuing Interest:
   • The internship program has worked out well.
   • We are interested in continuing our participation in the internship program.

Conclusion

There is a need to prepare the young professionals to assume the pro-active role in coping with new technology and the information explosion. In a nutshell, any such Internship program will help them in developing knowledge, skills and tools for the creation, collection, communication and consolidation of information. This will definitely turn a golden opportunity for the young professionals to empower themselves by way of imbibing all the necessary skills and competencies to meet the new challenges of ever growing Information Society. This has to be done at par with the 'Medical Professional Internship'. There is an urgent need of accommodating 'Library Internship' in the LIS curriculum at the national level. This can be
made a 'compulsory exercise' as a partial fulfillment of the Post-Graduate Programme in Library and Information Science.

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