Backstory: Vermont Internship Program

Program Overview

The College of Arts and Sciences Internship Program, the University of Vermont History Department, the Center for Research on Vermont and the Vermont Historical Society have teamed up to provide a semester-long internship at a local Vermont historical society for a student in the College of Arts & Sciences.

Students of all majors are invited to participate in the program provided they have an interest in history, storytelling, archiving, marketing, communications or collections management. Internships are a vital piece of a liberal arts education and the College of Arts and Sciences is committed to providing their students with a diverse range of experiential learning opportunities.

Program Components:

The Internship:

Students will be placed in a local historical society in the state of Vermont. Many of these societies consist of one or two people and are in desperate need of help from passionate and dedicated students.

Hours required: depends on how many credits you are enrolled in. A typical intern will work 8-10 hours per week for a total of 120 hours across the semester. Most internship sites offer flexible schedules and/or remote work.

Internship Locations:

In 2018, internships were available at historical societies in Island Pond, Dorset, Hardwick, Glover, Rockingham, Barre and St. Albans as well as in Burlington at a community arts organization. If you know of a historical society who would like to participate, please send them to:

Transportation assistance is available for those placed in towns that are farther afield. Please contact Sophia.Trigg@uvm.edu with questions.

Some internship locations offer perks such as housing, a small stipend, or meal money.

Internship Focus:

Backstory: Vermont offers four general types of internships. But each is customizable to what the student is passionate about and what the individual historical society needs. It all depends on you and the society you are placed with giving you and them the best possible experience!
**Collections & Archive Management** – Interns will be working with written records, cleaning and moving artifacts, inventorying and cataloguing the collection, photographing artifacts and researching and writing about local stories/history.

**Exhibitions** – Interns will be inventorying and cataloguing artifacts around a certain topic, working with written records, cleaning and mounting artifacts for display, photographing and, if possible, scanning records, researching and writing short histories pertaining to a theme, creating visuals and displays and creating exhibit interactives and educational components.

**Public Outreach** – Interns will work on website development, social media, and newsletters, will write stories and develop original content specific to the town, promote events and/or lecture series, and visit retirement homes, libraries and other town locations to spread awareness about the historical society.

**Special Project** – Interns will be working on a special project defined by the historical society. These projects ideally would take a semester or less to complete so that the intern will take it from beginning to end. Types of projects may include creating a tour of the society’s museum, creating an inventory from scratch, fundraising for a specific exhibit or program and/or assisting in a move between buildings.

**Academic Credit:**

If the intern is an undergraduate student at UVM, they must enroll in internship credit during the semester they are participating.

- 40 hours of internship work required per credit. Ex. Three credits = 120 hours.

- Students must have an identified Historical Society (HS) site mentor, register in a class (History Dept or AS-190) and work out a work plan that is approved by their academic mentor, and HS advisor and keep weekly reports and submit a final reflection paper.

Note: If the intern is not a UVM student, the internship does not have to be for credit.

**Professional Standards:**

Students must have regular meetings with their site mentor, work out a plan with clear deliverables to benefit the historical society, arrive on-time and ready to work, and maintain professional dress and standard of work throughout.

**To Apply:**

Please fill out the attached application form (also found on the Backstory: Vermont website) and send to Sophia.Trigg@uvm.edu with your responses to the short answer questions, your writing sample and your resume. We will let you know that we have received your application and will be in touch shortly with next steps.
Any questions?
Contact CAS Internship Coordinator Sophia Trigg at Sophia.Trigg@uvm.edu or 802-656-1212
Backstory: Vermont Internship Program

Application Form

All application materials should be submitted via email to Sophia.Trigg@uvm.edu

Last Name:                          First name:                          Middle Initial:

UVM Student*?  Yes  No – (please provide school name: )

Expected Graduation Date:

Major(s):                                     Minor(s):

What type of internship are you interested in? (circle all that apply):

Collections & Archives  Exhibits  Public Outreach  Marketing/Media

Other special interest:

Relevant Coursework (be specific – course numbers, titles, etc) (Expand section as needed or attach):

Relevant Experience (be specific – may include volunteer positions, class work, service learning, summer programs, internships, jobs, research work, theses, extracurricular activities etc) (Expand section as needed or attach):


**Contact information for two faculty references:**

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**Additional Materials Required:**

1. On a second sheet of paper, please answer the following short answer questions:
   a. What interests you about this internship?
   b. How would your skills/expertise benefit the historical society you are placed in?
   c. Is there anything else we should know about you?

2. Please attach a writing sample (or other form of media) showcasing your work in the field of historical research and conceptualization.

3. Please also attach a copy of your CV or Resume.

*Note: If you are a UVM student and are accepted into the Backstory: Vermont program, you MUST register in either AS-190 or in internship credit within your academic department.*
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Program Overview for Historical Societies

The College of Arts and Sciences Internship Program, the University of Vermont History Department, the Center for Research on Vermont and the Vermont Historical Society have teamed up to provide a semester-long internship at a local Vermont historical society for a student in the College of Arts & Sciences.

Internships are a vital piece of a liberal arts education and the College of Arts and Sciences is committed to providing their students with a diverse range of experiential learning opportunities.

Information for Historical Societies:

Having an intern can be a wonderful and rewarding experience for both the organization and the intern. These students are on their way toward degrees in diverse fields related to history and/or collections management and will be able to fill a need within your historical society.

What can an intern do?

A college student in 2018 may be different than the college student that you remember. Students accepted into the Backstory: Vermont program are professional, eager, and well versed in many computer programs. In other words – they are ready to make your life easier.

As ‘technology natives’ these students have grown up figuring out how to do things on their own. If they don’t know how to do something, they will probably Google it first and ask you questions later. This means that constant supervision and in-person work time are not essential for a successful internship experience. (Especially if the internship is focused around a certain project that the student can do using their personal computer or the UVM library).

What is an internship?

An internship is an agreement between a student and a historical society that outlines intended outcomes and learning opportunities for both the student and the society.

The internship is intended to provide a service to the historical society. We want this to be a worthwhile experience for you! And in completing a project or task that you need doing, the intern will likewise gain a sense of accomplishment.

It is best if you have a particular project in mind, but you may discover that the intern has a particular interest or skill that you could take advantage of!
In turn, the historical society may learn something from the student! Because many of them are able to work with social media, websites or graphic design, they may be able to teach your employees how to set up and maintain digital practices that will increase interest in your historical work. Think about what you need as well as what an intern may need!

**What does a historical society mentor do?**

Each student in the Backstory: Vermont program will be enrolled for academic credit at UVM. This means that most of the reflective and personal analysis work will be done in class with their professor. But, each intern must also have a designated mentor at the historical society. This person will be able to verify the student’s hours, review their work and provide assistance with the intern’s project or task. This *does not* mean that the mentor is required to physically supervise the students work, or sit with the student while they work unless detailed supervision is needed (in the case of delicate or rare artifacts or processes that need professional supervision).

We recognize that many small historical societies do not have a physical space or collection in which to work. If the student is working remotely on a project, the mentor will need to keep an eye on their hours and determine if the hours worked seem reasonable for the amount of work they produce. It is also important that the mentor keep in email/phone contact with the student throughout the internship and that the student complete some of their hours in-person.

The mentor *is not* responsible for teaching the student about the history of the area. The student should be able to research information themselves that pertains to the project they are working on.

But *you will* need to impart specific or technical knowledge that is required for the student to complete their work. For example, how to use your archival software, how to create a sturdy physical display or exhibit, how best to organize notes or information about objects, etc. The student should be learning how to work at a historical society. (See: ‘What should a student get out of an internship?’ below.)

**What should a student get out of an internship?**

The purpose of an internship is for the intern to gain valuable work experience, transferable skills, and practice producing work that matters in the real world.

Students in this program want to know what it is like working at a historical society. How do you organize your database? How do you enter information? How do you conceptualize a new exhibit? How do you choose a topic to focus on? How do you physically construct exhibits? How do you reach out to the community? These questions may seem like old hat, but they are brand new experiences for an intern.

Students are doing internships because they want to gain professional experience in a field that interests them. This means that just working with you and your team is a learning opportunity. How do you communicate? How are tasks prioritized? What processes could be streamlined? These are all opportunities for learning for a student who has not yet held a full-time job.
Likewise, students are also in want of transferable or “life” skills. Skills that they can carry with them no matter where they end up: punctuality, communication, organization, responsibility, etc.

Finally, as simple as it seems, offering your intern a letter of recommendation or helping them put their experience on their resume are both incredibly valuable outcomes of an internship.

Preparing for an Intern:

Preparation is essential to a successful internship. Thinking about what you want and what you may have to offer are both important steps. Here are some other things to consider:

Attracting an intern:

Consider providing a stipend, housing, or travel assistance to your intern. This can make your historical society more attractive to potential interns. Especially if they do not have access to a car and are living near Burlington.

If your society cannot offer any of these benefits, that’s ok! An interesting or engaging project can work just as well.

A well-defined project:

What can be done during the course of a 15 week semester? Students will work a minimum of 120 hours – which is 8-10 hours per week. This can be done all at once (one 8-hour day) or split between multiple days. Some students may want to work up to 240 hours over 15 weeks.

Some project examples from 2018:

- Scanning and organizing a large collection of town photos and then bringing the photos to elderly people in the community for identification.
- Creation of a newsletter (printed, at least 16 pages, bi-annual).
- Rehousing of a collection.
- Digitizing genealogical manuscripts or other ephemera.
- PastPerfect (or other catalogue) data input of a defined collection.
- Creation of an exhibit focusing on a specific element of historical life (ie. Music in 1925).
- Cataloguing and shelving a book collection.
- Creation of a tour through the museum including highlights of artifacts of note and then recording it for future tour guides.
- Creation and development of a social media presence, email newsletter and updated website.

Consider Department of Labor standards:

The U.S. Department of Labor has outlined six key criteria for determining trainee status:
Interns cannot displace regular employees
Interns are not guaranteed a job at the end of the internship (though you may decide to hire them at the conclusion of the experience)
Interns are not entitled to wages during the internship (although they are allowed to earn wages)
Interns must receive training from your organization, even if it somewhat impedes the work
Interns must get hands-on experience with equipment and processes used in your industry
Interns’ training must primarily benefit them, not the organization.

For additional information regarding these standards, see the U.S. Department of Labor Fact Sheet #71

Creation of work plan:

At the beginning of the internship period, or even during the interview process if appropriate, students and their mentors should create a work plan that outlines the intended goals and outlines of the internship.

Consider the following questions:

• What is the project to be completed?
• What are the action steps toward completion?
• What does the student want to learn?
• How can that be incorporated into their work at the society?
• What skills (technical or transferable) will the student gain through this internship?
• What is the student’s work schedule?
• Professional expectations?

The student may be required to submit this document to their professor, so make sure they have a copy!
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Timeline & Deadlines

Fall 2018:

**Application deadline:** August 20, 2018 (rolling until this date – apply as soon as possible to be considered for our limited internship placements).

To apply you will need:

- Application form (found on Backstory: Vermont website)
- Responses to short answer questions listed on application form
- Writing sample (or other form of media) showcasing your work in the field of historical research and/or cultural conceptualization.
- CV or Resume

See the Backstory: Vermont website for details on each of these items.

**Notification:** August 21 – 24, 2018

We will be in touch to let you know if you have been accepted and to put you in touch with possible internship locations.

**Internship Matching/Selection Process:** August 24 – September 7, 2018

You will speak with the internship locations provided to find one that is a great match for you. They may contact you for an interview or meeting.

**Add/Drop deadline:** September 10, 2018

If you have an internship placement, you must be registered in a UVM internship course if you are a UVM student.

**Internship period:** September 10 – December 14, 2018

This is the period in which you must complete your 120 hours (if registered for 3 credits).