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# Sea Change: A Community Approach to Archives Internships

Rebecca Goldman MSLIS  
La Salle University, goldman@lasalle.edu

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# Sea change: a community approach to archives internships

Rebecca Goldman  
~~Arizona Archives Alliance~~  
Delaware Valley Archivists Group  
~~October 30, 2015~~  
May 11, 2016

This presentation is adapted from one that I gave last year, funded by the Arizona Archives Alliance.

Delaware Valley Archivists Group (DVAG)  
Last Meeting of 2011

*Small Archival Repositories and Professional Archivists:  
Building a Community of Practice*



**When:**

Wednesday, November 30, 2011 4pm to 6pm

**Where:**

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania  
1300 Locust Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
(directions: <http://g.co/maps/f5ch5>)

**Who:**

This DVAG event is also open to members of small archival repositories (local historical societies, historic sites, small museums, etc). Invite your friends at these small institutions to come share their perspectives and learn about the HCI-PSAR project!

In 2011, I attended a DVAG meeting about the small repositories project, but our small group discussions ended up being about internships. The consensus of the meeting, as I remember it, was that the best way to help small repositories was to get our local archives students working in them, for free, maybe supervised, maybe not. That was my last DVAG meeting. As I was preparing this talk for Arizona, I kept thinking about how I wished I could do it in Philly.



I really wish I'd said more at the time, so thanks for giving me the opportunity to follow up, 5 years later.



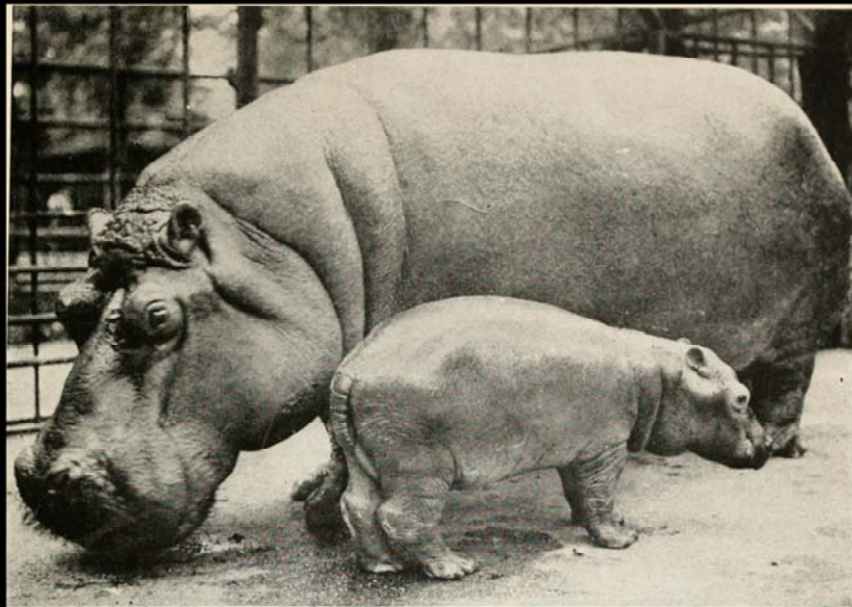
The British Library, "Image taken from page 49 of 'Picture Posies...'"  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary/11105771265>

I've been an archivist, in responsibilities if not in title, for about 8 years now. And in that time I've been fortunate to meet and work with many, many interns and other new professionals—as an intern in multiple academic libraries, as a paraprofessional in an archives that hosted many, many interns, and as former chair of SAA's Students and New Archives Professionals Roundtable. I've heard a lot of stories, good and bad, firsthand and secondhand. And yet, because we're such a small field, it's hard to tell a truly anonymous story about an archives colleague. So whenever you see this picture, it means we're having storytime. I'm telling a fictionalized story, to try to illustrate a point about internships without violating anyone's privacy.



That goes for me, too. And here's my mostly-true story. I had 2 paid internships as a grad student, in 2 local academic libraries. One was planning and executing a research study, under a supervisor who had never run a research study. Another was devising a custom metadata schema for a new digital collection—with minimal information about how the digital collection website would work, or what people would use it for, or what the metadata was supposed to do, exactly. I learned a lot, mostly on my own, and I landed a great full-time, entry-level job after graduating—at one of the libraries where I was already working.

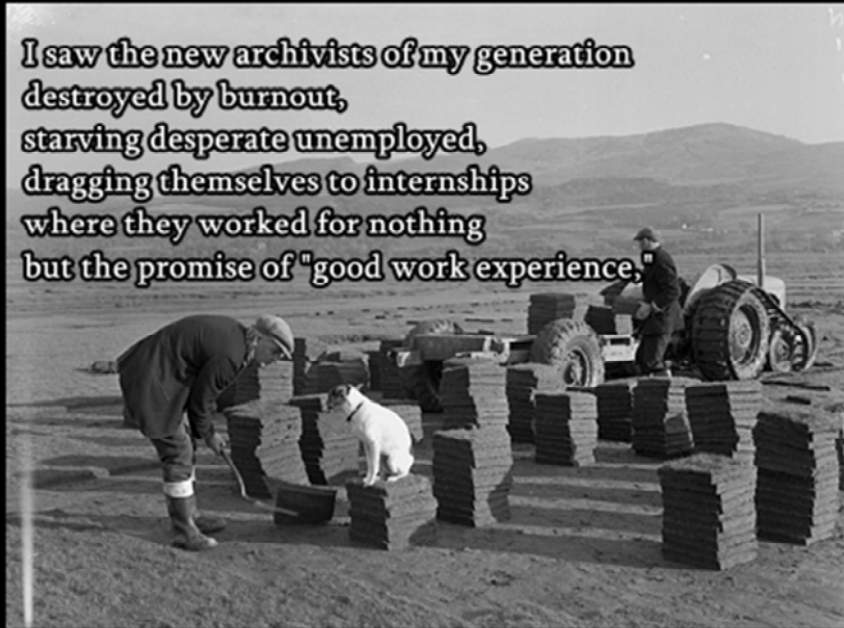
So I did okay. But my internship experiences, even though I was working on-site at 2 very large libraries, full of incredibly talented librarians and archivists, were lonely, and isolating, and didn't leave me confident in the skills I was supposed to be building. As archivists, we're all about context—and I want to talk about the contexts in which our internships occur.



Internet Archive Book Images, "Image from page 52 of "The babyhood of wild beasts" (1917)"  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary/11105771265>

I'm also working on a master's degree in public history, which wasn't really on my mind when I was initially writing this talk, but I found out since then that my program requires an internship for academic credit. So I'll be starting an unpaid internship this summer, and if I'm being honest I feel like a little bit of a hippo-crite.

**I saw the new archivists of my generation  
destroyed by burnout,  
starving desperate unemployed,  
dragging themselves to internships  
where they worked for nothing  
but the promise of "good work experience."**

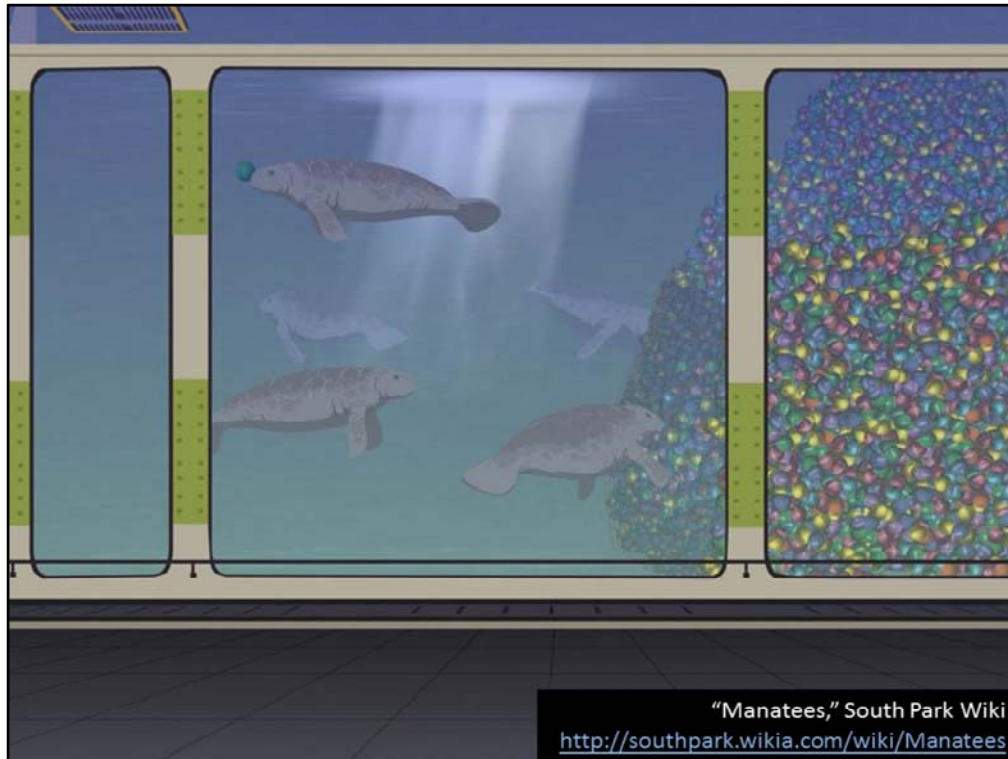


Rebecca Goldman, "Post-SAA Howl"

<https://derangementanddescription.wordpress.com/2010/08/16/post-saa-howl>

Now, I don't really have any special expertise when it comes to internships. But I do have a lot of opinions!





I'm really good at coming up with new ideas, and not always so good at sorting out the good ones from the bad ones. So I hope that you all, like the manatees who pick out ideas for Family Guy episodes, will help with that part after my talk. Also I will be using lots of pictures of sea creatures.

<http://southpark.wikia.com/wiki/Manatees>

### The Starfish Story

An old man had a habit of early morning walks on the beach. One day, after a storm, he saw a human figure in the distance moving like a dancer. As he came closer he saw that it was a young woman and she was not dancing but was reaching down to the sand, picking up a starfish and very gently throwing them into the ocean.

"Young lady," he asked, "Why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?"

"The sun is up, and the tide is going out, and if I do not throw them in they will die."

"But young lady, do you not realize that there are miles and miles of beach and starfish all along it? You cannot possibly make a difference."

The young woman listened politely, paused and then bent down, picked up another starfish and threw it into the sea, past the breaking waves, saying, "It made a difference for that one."



**"Starfish Story: one step towards changing the world"**

<http://www.prm.nau.edu/prm205/starfish-story.htm>

Have you ever heard the starfish story? There are a few variations—I have one here on this slide—but it basically goes like this: Person A comes across person B throwing beached starfish back into the ocean. Person A says, there are too many starfish! You can't make a difference! And Person B throws a starfish back in and says, I can make a difference for this one. Aww. Let's be inspired for a moment.



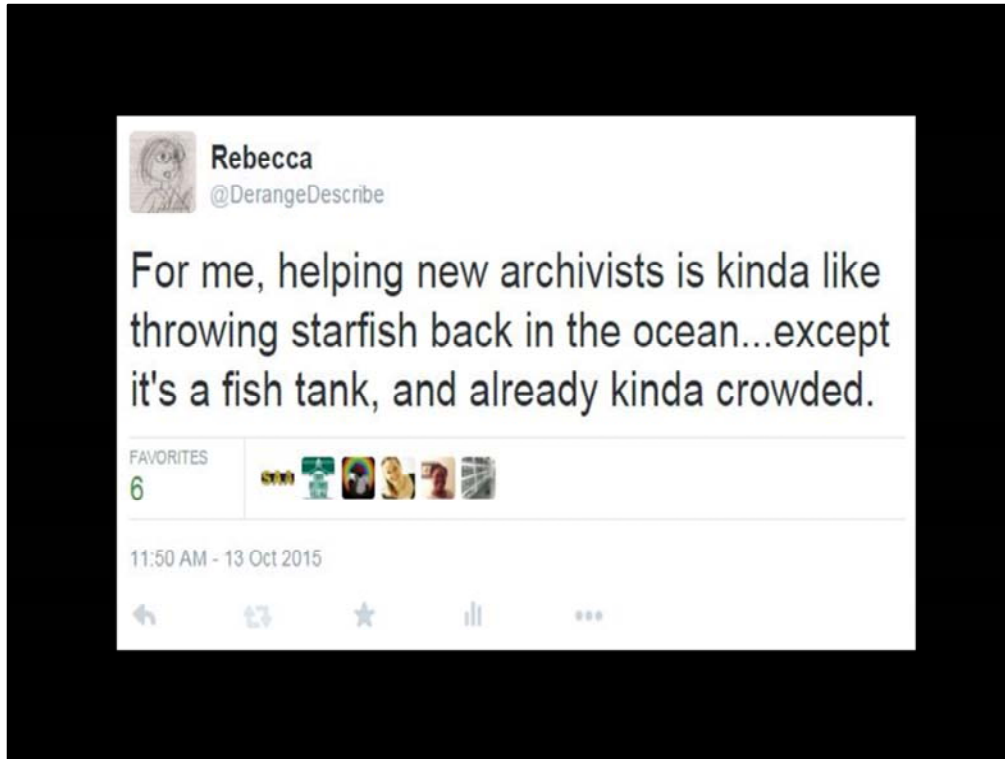
But there's also a cynical interpretation to this story—focusing on helping individual starfish instead of, say, addressing the environmental changes that would cause a whole bunch of starfish to wash up on a beach. (I wish I'd know the Wagner had starfish—I would have used some in my presentation!)



It treats starfish as a homogenous group, when there are about 1,500 species (thanks Wikipedia!)



And if we want to go all the way with this metaphor—the ocean isn't necessarily a great place for a starfish right now. There's this awful mystery disease called sea star wasting that makes starfish's limbs fall off.



And that's kind of the way I've always thought about my role in the internship world. With a tight job market in archives, helping out feels like playing a zero-sum game. Helping one archivist land a job or internship just means that a different person will lose out, and helping someone break into the field doesn't mean that they'll be able to survive and thrive.

"Do you collect?"

"Only like this," he said softly, gesturing amidst the wreckage of the shore. "And only for the living." He stooped again, oblivious of my curiosity, and skipped another star neatly across the water. "The stars," he said, "throw well. One can help them."

..."I do not collect," I said uncomfortably, the wind beating at my garments. "Neither the living nor the dead. I gave it up a long time ago. Death is the only successful collector."

*Loren C. Eiseley, The Star Thrower*

Anyway, being a good archivist and librarian, I knew I needed to track down the original source of this story before I could use it in my presentation. It's from a book called *The Star Thrower*, a collection of essays and poems with observations by a scientist about nature. In the title essay, there's still a curious passer-by and a starfish thrower, but they're both out on the beach in a crowd of collectors, who are greedily grabbing up shells and dead starfish for their own collections. The narrator looks out at the starfish littering the beach. For him, the issue isn't not being able to save all the starfish. It's being that arbiter, deciding which starfish get saved.

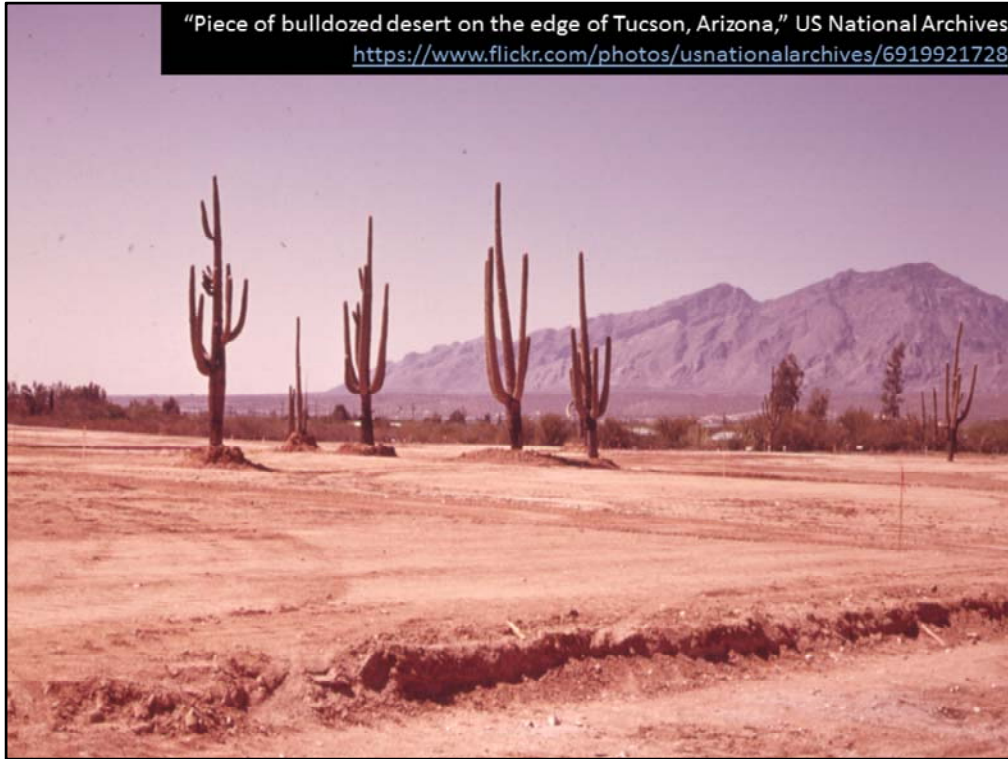
I adjusted the dark lens of my glasses and, thus disguised, I paced slowly back by the starfish gatherers, past the shell collectors...

Behind my sunglasses a kind of litany began and refused to die down. *“As I came through the desert thus it was, as I came through the desert.”*

*Loren C. Eiseley, The Star Thrower*

And there's so much more to the story than that! The star thrower and the star collectors inspire the narrator to think about different ecosystems; for him, the seashore becomes a desert.





And I originally gave this presentation in Tucson, so here's a photo of the Arizona desert.

...I put on the sunglasses once more,  
but the face from the torn photograph  
persisted behind them. It was as  
though I, as man, was being asked to  
confront, in all its overbearing weight,  
the universe itself.

*Loren C. Eiseley, The Star Thrower*

And there's even an archives connection, too. The author describes coming across a stash of old photos in his family home, and how a photo of his mother as a child reinforces his growing belief in the interconnectedness of things.



I want us to think about archives internships as part of an ecosystem, and to think about what we can do to shape that ecosystem and help interns to thrive. I want us to think about the things we can't change, and how we adapt, and how we help our interns adapt. I want us to think about how archives, and the interns and internships we host, exist within larger systems of higher education and employment. I want us to think about other ecosystems—not just libraries and archives, but other fields that require preprofessional practical experience. What are other fields doing right, and how can we apply their successes in our own community?

There are bigger things happening outside of the LIS school/jobs conundrum (which itself is simply a manifestation of our economy's larger sickness)...The new rules of our economy dictate survival. We're all just out here trying to survive. And ***unless you're willing to actively rise up, fight or die against the republic tomorrow and demand living wages and jobs for all,*** you're complicit in and need to work within this paradigm. Simple. Survival.

S. Williams, "Hungry"

<https://medium.com/@Wribrarian/hungry-fbfbe0e5fe85>

There's lots of great advice out there for individual interns and job seekers—we can talk more about this during the Q&A if you'd like. But interns aren't empowered to make changes beyond their own internships, and we shouldn't expect them to. At the same time, I don't think archivists, working alone, are going to solve any of the larger employment problems that affect anyone, in any field, coming out of school and trying to break into the workforce.

What can we do  
on the community level  
to support interns?

I want to spend the next hour or so thinking about what we can do within the local Philadelphia community.

## What's special about our community?

- Multiple academic programs that train archivists
- Wide range of repositories and repository types
- Close proximity to each other
- Close proximity to other archival communities

When I spoke in Arizona, I did it without really knowing much about what it's like to be an archivist there, and what the regional community of archives and archivists is like. We in Philly have some unique advantages, thanks to our geography. We have multiple academic programs that train archivists, including library science and history programs. We have a wide range of repositories and types of repositories—academic, government, museums, historical societies, etc. And we're near other large cities with student archivists and lots of repositories of their own.

Good internships benefit  
the local archives community.

Bad internships harm  
the local archives community.

This goes way beyond the interns and host institutions directly involved. Archives at large and the people we serve benefit from well-trained archivists. As part of our responsibility to the next generation of users, we have a responsibility to the next generation of archivists.

...In our library management meetings, other managers **deprioritized our need for additional staffing because we seemed to have such a steady stream of competent, if not fabulous, volunteers and interns.** Resources were then directed to other areas of the library that didn't have such demand for unpaid work experience... By taking in so many interns and volunteers to assist with daily operations, I undermined my ability to convince others that I needed additional resources to hire and pay staff to do this very work. I unwittingly devalued archival work.

Michelle Light, "Internships, Privilege and SAA: A Council Member Responds"

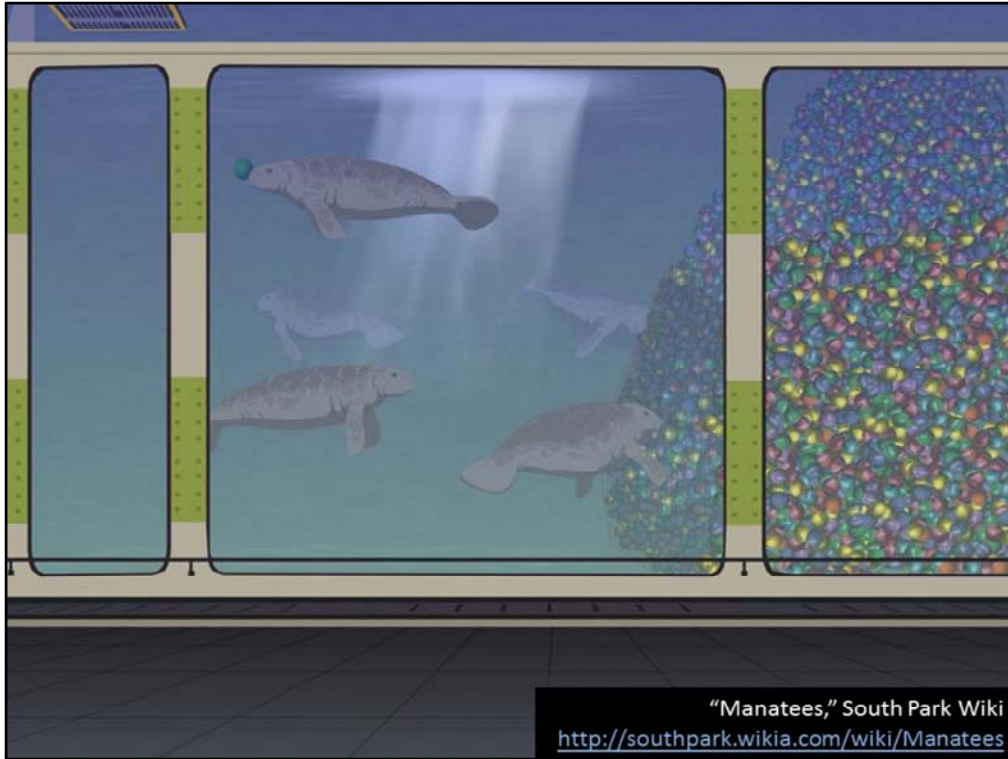
At their worst, archives internships devalue the work of professional archivists and can even hurt our advocacy for additional staffing. This is from a blog post by former SAA Council rep Michelle Light, and I'm so grateful to her for sharing her experience as a negative example for the rest of us to try to avoid as we think about incorporating internships into our repositories.

<http://offtherecord.archivists.org/2013/08/22/internships-privilege-and-saa-a-council-member-responds/>



Archivists can help  
local interns  
without hosting internships.

Maybe you can't host an intern at your workplace. Maybe you're still an intern yourself, or early in your own career, or still trying to land that first job. I think we all have roles to play in supporting interns in our community.



Alright, idea ball time!

As a community,  
we set standards  
for ethical internships,  
and we don't advertise  
or promote internships  
that don't meet  
those standards.

You want to post your internship on our mailing list or website? It better meet our basic standards. You want to pay a local student to do some basic data entry work? Great—just don't call it an internship, or we won't help you promote it. You get what I'm saying here. So, let's set some standards.



In an ethical internship ecosystem, interns are friends, not food. They are not a source of free labor for our archives, but future colleagues, whom we all have an interest in training well.

Internships engage graduate students in **professional-level work that supplements formal archival education** and core knowledge, strengthens or introduces new skills, encourages collaboration and teamwork, and helps to develop their understanding of how archival theories and methods are applied in practice. Such work is performed under the **supervision of experienced archives professionals**...Internship projects are designed so that students can **produce a complete work product**...Interns should be **allowed to use works generated during their internship as part of a portfolio or job application.**

*SAA's Best Practices for Internships as a Component of Graduate Archival Education*  
<http://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/BestPract-Internships.pdf>

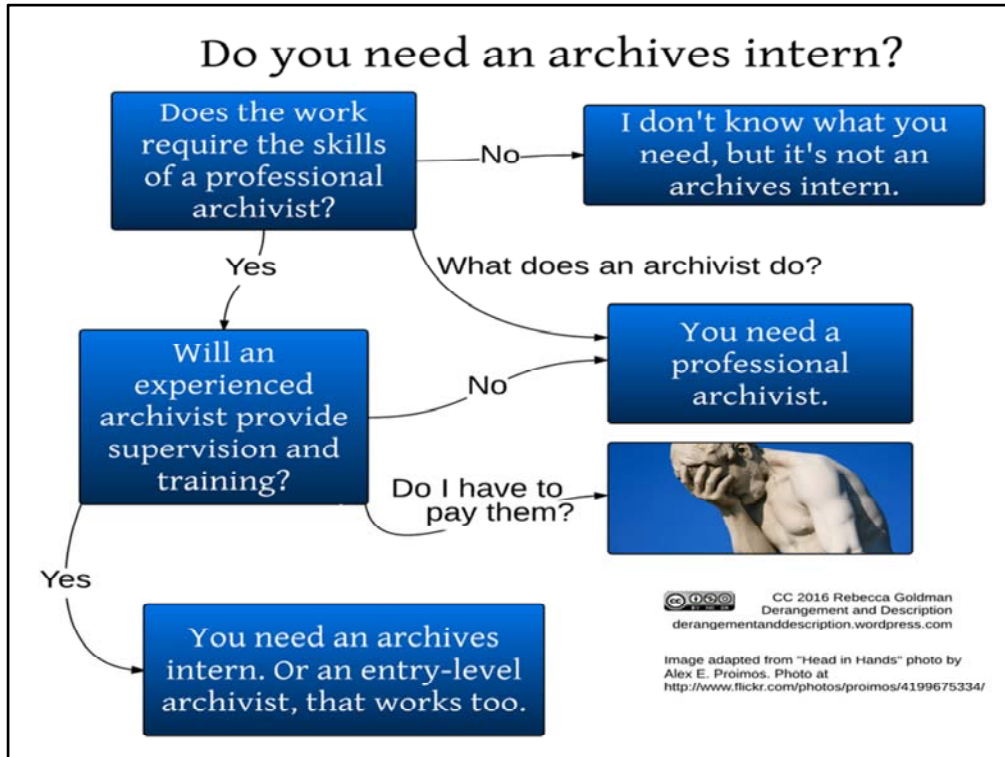
And we need to come up with some kind of standard that ensures we treat interns as future colleagues, not a source of free labor. SAA does have a best practices document for internships, and I think their description of the nature of the work is helpful here, so I quoted it here. But the guide also assumes a very specific kind of internship—for academic credit, with a faculty supervisor who's actually an archivist. In a field that welcomes practitioners from different professional and educational backgrounds, we need to be flexible here.

### At a bare minimum, internships:

- Involve an intern, a supervisor, and a professor/mentor, all of whom provide feedback and a final evaluation
- Help interns build a set of archives skills and other professional skills, over a predetermined time period
- Result in a finding aid, exhibit, report, or other product that the intern can use to demonstrate skills learned
- Benefit the intern, the host site, and the local community

This is my idea for a minimum standard, but I would love to hear your suggestions during the Q&A!

And this is especially important if it's unpaid--Benefit the intern, the host site, and the local community



I know this is confusing for a lot of people who think intern = free labor, so I made a flow chart. I hope it helps a little.



I think these are pretty minimal standards, and we should be willing to call out internships in our community that don't meet them.

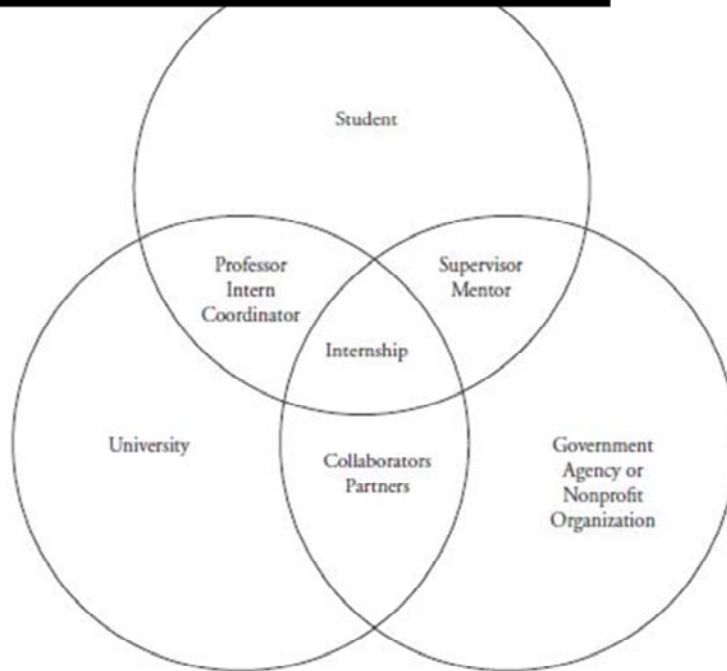
<https://imgflip.com/i/t3lu0>





The British Library, "Image taken from page 49 of 'Picture Posies...'"  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary/11105771265>

Here's a story of an intern I knew. She already had her MLS and was thinking about going back to school for an archives concentration, so she got an internship in an archives, doing low-level processing and data-entry type work. She was incredibly shy, to the point of coming across as unfriendly, and no one really talked to her—including the internship supervisor. She spent almost a year on work that wasn't really pre-professional, and I'm not sure what she got out of the internship experience, or if she even ended up in an archives program. She didn't advocate for herself, and there was no one advocating for her.



Successful internships don't just have a supervisor and an intern. This is a chart from an article about public affairs internships, and it shows the three constituents—the student, the university, and the internship host site—as well as the different relationships among the three. But that's not enough. In situations where the internship isn't for academic credit, who fills the professor's role?

Internships Adrift?  
Anchoring Internship Programs  
in Collaboration  
Abraham D. Benavides and Lisa A. Dicke  
*University of North Texas*  
Amy C. Holt  
*Texas Municipal Clerks Association*



The British Library, "Image taken from page 49 of 'Picture Posies...'"  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary/11105771265>

Another internship story, about an archives student doing a processing internship at a small repository. After talking with the student for just a few minutes, I found several things wrong with this internship. The person supervising her was a volunteer, not a trained archivist. And at this repository, processing was item-level, organizing individual documents by subject instead of by provenance. I told the student, hey, this doesn't sound like a very good internship. But her faculty advisor wasn't concerned about it, so she wasn't either, and she loved the collections she was working with and didn't want to intern anywhere else.

As a community,  
we provide mentors  
for the duration  
of an internship.

Even if you can't host an internship yourself, you can serve as a mentor for an intern at another institution, filling the role that a professor might fill in an internship for academic credit. You can provide unbiased feedback if an intern is having a conflict with her supervisor, or is concerned that the internship is progressing too slowly or too quickly. And this isn't something just for experienced archivists—if you've done a processing internship, you can help mentor a processing intern. As a parapro who worked alongside many interns, I often tried to fill this role, but trust me—it works way better with an outside person. I also think this could be a way to address the mentor/protégé mismatch—in SAA, and I'm guessing in other orgs as well, there are more people requesting mentors than there are people volunteering to be a mentor. I think the short-term, project-focused nature of an internship mentorship could be a way to recruit archivists who might otherwise be hesitant about filling a mentor role.

As a community,  
we recognize and reward  
the work of  
internship supervisors  
and mentors.


We have plenty of awards for archivists, but none related to internships. Being a good supervisor or mentor is hard work, and it doesn't "count" as professional activity the way that teaching a course does, or presenting at a conference. But it's important work, and it deserves recognition.

As a community,  
we host and support  
internship peer groups.

One of the things I love about our profession is that, even though we're in a competitive field, our grad students still support each other through school and the job hunt. This idea about peer groups comes from a book called *The Internship, Practicum, and Field Placement Handbook*, a guide for interns in helping professions like social work and clinical psychology. These peer groups provide a structured environment for interns to discuss their experiences and learn from each other. In a city our size, I think we have critical mass for an in-person meeting—maybe you could even host it at your repository?—but online meetings through Skype could also be helpful.

As a community,  
we don't compete  
for interns,  
just like we don't compete  
for collections.

If a repository down the street has a fantastic collection on the history of marine biology, and a renowned marine biologist offers me her papers? I'm directing her to the repository down the street. Along similar lines, if an intern approaches one of our repositories about an internship, and we know of another repository better able to provide the experience she's looking for, we should send her there. And we should know this about our neighbor repositories!



As a community,  
we open our doors  
to visiting interns  
to support skill-building.

Maybe you don't have the time or resources to host an internship. But if you have a working ArchivesSpace installation, maybe you could host an intern for a day or two, so she can learn how it works and bring that knowledge back to her host site. This type of exchange could also be a fantastic way to share skills across our local repositories.





A few years ago, I hosted a project processing archivist who had a lot of processing experience and wanted to broaden her skills. She came to my archives and gave us a day-long processing workshop, and I spent a day with her showing her some of the digital tools we were using, like Archive-It, and working with her to explore software new to both us, like setting up a test installation of Archivesmatica. Highly recommended! And it would totally work for interns, too.

As a community,  
we offer  
flexible internship options.

Most internships are 9-5 weekday gigs, which can be tough for interns who may have 9-5 jobs on top of their internships. Can we coordinate with our colleagues to offer evening or weekend hours to interns? Extended hours are great for patrons too! Can some of the work be done remotely, without losing the level of supervision essential to an internship?

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

<http://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/libraryconf/1>

Internships that go the distance: A how-to-do-it (and how-not-to-do-it) guide to online internships

[Link to Full Text](#)

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[Rebecca Goldman](#), *La Salle University*

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### Document Type

Presentation

### Publication Date

Fall 2011

### Abstract

The growth of online archival education and digital projects in archives have led to increased interest in online internships. This presentation discusses some of the challenges of running an online internship program and provides recommendations for supervisors and interns on how to create a worthwhile internship experience.

### Comments

Presented at the Fall 2011 meeting of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference in Bethlehem, PA.

Another story, but this one is already online! In a previous job, my boss and I shared supervision of a fully-online internship, working on metadata for our web archive and for a collection of digitized images. Spoiler alert: online internships are doable, but challenging, for supervisors and interns.

The presentation includes examples of other remote internships, so I won't repeat them here. Go read it!

As a community,  
we commit to learning the skills  
that interns and job-seekers  
are expected to learn.


New archivists need digital skills! We know, we know. We've heard this a million times. But do we have the skills to supervise an intern building her digital skills? Going back to the sharing interns idea, even if each of us individually doesn't know how to edit an XSL stylesheet, or run a digital forensics workstation, or start a Facebook page, do we have those skills within our community? Do we know where to send an intern if she wants to learn those skills?

As a community,  
we fund interns  
to attend workshops  
and bring their new skills  
back to the community.

How awesome would this be? We all chip in to send a local intern to an SAA workshop in some distant city, and then she comes back and teaches us what she learned. Hillary mentioned earlier that DVAG offers scholarships to attend the SAA conference—could we do something similar for workshops?

As a community,  
we recognize and value  
the skills and experiences  
that interns bring  
from outside the archives field.

None of us majored in archives, and many of us had another academic life or professional career before entering the archives field. Including interns. We could do a much better job incorporating these non-archives-specific skills into our internship.



As a community,  
we learn from  
our successful  
and failed internships.

Every internship is an experiment. Why not treat it like one and publish the results? You can find models for what a good internship agreement and work plan look like, but why not share specifics? Here's a processing internship that worked, and one that didn't. We struggled to set up an internship in digital curation, and here's what we learned in the process. I think the local community can be a safe space for us to share failures related to internships. Remember, we're talking failed internships, not failed interns or supervisors.

As a community,  
we publicize the work  
that our interns are doing.

Let's make sure they get credit and recognition!





The Peabody Museum put up a video highlighting the work of one of their interns.



**intern** is a bi-annual independent print publication *for and by* the creative youth

Our opinion is that an ongoing debate about internships is *a necessity*. Since 2013, we've provided a contemporary platform for the discussion, at the same time showcasing the work of emerging young creatives for whom the subject is of critical importance.

Through a variety of perspectives we host a balanced, unbiased and frank discussion. Enabled by our open

the magazine are its young contributors, who shape each issue with their ideas, insights and inquisitions.

All of our contributors are paid, a policy fundamental to the project and one that is enabled by our brilliant sponsors, who invest in and lend their support to equal opportunities in the creative industries through their backing.

Intern Magazine is produced by creative arts interns in the UK. It's sponsored, and the contributors get paid. It features discussions of internship issues and shows off the work interns are doing—kinda like Archival Outlook, but all focused on interns.

# Newsroom

## Intern Profile: Stan Fonseca '15

JUNE 18, 2014

### Stan Fonseca '15

Major: History

Hometown: Winchester, Massachusetts

#### Can you tell us what you're doing this summer? What are your basic duties as an intern?

I'm working for **Oregon Encyclopedia**—a web-based resource for all things Oregon history—researching and writing entries to be peer-reviewed and published online. I'm assigned an entry topic, for example, "Black Cowboys in Oregon," and I read up on it, find notable figures, dig up some sweet old photos to accompany the entry, and then write about 500 words explaining the history of the topic and any key events/places/people within it.



Here's a news release for a student doing a summer internship in history, put out by his college.

<https://www.lclark.edu/live/news/26700-intern-profile-stan-fonseca-15>

**How has Lewis & Clark supported you in the process of finding, securing, and funding your internship?**

Jane Hunter, the wonderful professor of history, is on the Oregon Encyclopedia board and helped get me the position. The money from the Fowler-Levin grant is getting me a bike with which I can get to the Oregon Historical Society archives and numerous other helpful places in the research process.

*The **Stephanie Fowler and Irving Levin Summer Internship Award** was established by Stephanie Fowler M.A. '97 and Irving Levin, generous donors committed to ensuring that Lewis & Clark students are able to have meaningful and enriching summer internship experiences.*

The news release highlights the award the student received to fund his internship, and even gives credit to the donors who made the award possible.

As a community,  
we use the experiences  
of our interns  
to advocate for  
paid internships  
and professional positions.

Every project completed by an intern is an opportunity to go back to our stakeholders and say, here's what we could do more, better, faster, with additional professional staff.

As a community,  
we help prepare interns  
to thrive outside  
the archives ecosystem.

Whether you see it as a too many grads problem, or a not enough jobs problem, there are more archives grads than there are available jobs. If you have a reasonably secure job in an archives, you probably don't spend too much time thinking about how you might use your archives skills in another field. If you're a grad student, or still trying to land a permanent job, it's risky not to.

[Sr. Architect](#) / British Management / Pittsburgh, PA

[Data Governance Lead](#) / University of Pittsburgh Medical Center / Pittsburgh, PA

[DHPS Archives Specialist](#) / Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts (CCAHA) / Phil

[DHPS Communications Assistant](#) / Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts (CCAHA)

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[Digital Scholarly Publishing Librarian](#) / University of Pennsylvania Libraries / Philadelphia,

[Physical Science and Engineering Libraries Intern](#) / University of Pennsylvania Libraries / I

[Intern – Taxonomy & Systems – Summer 2016](#) / QVC / West Chester, PA

[Associate University Librarian for Collections](#) / Villanova University / Villanova, PA

[Librarian \(Temporary Part Time – Pool\)](#) / Community College of Allegheny County / Alleg

[Multimedia Specialist \(Part Time\)](#) / Select Medical / Mechanicsburg, PA

[Librarian](#) / U.S. Army War College / Carlisle Barracks, PA / Apply by 5/9

[Digital Media Specialist](#) / PPL Corporation / Allentown, PA

[Lead Knowledge Management Analyst \(Firm Internal\)](#) / Deloitte & Touche LLP / Philadelp

This is a screenshot from the Pennsylvania section of INALJ—the I Need a Library Job site. “Library Job” is construed very broadly—it’s got listings for traditional library and archives jobs, but also jobs like “data governance lead” and “knowledge management analyst.” If you’re looking for a job, obviously it’s very useful, but I’d also recommend it to people who supervise interns, to start thinking about other careers that would benefit from an archives skillset.

### S11. Alternative Career Paths for Archivists

The job market for positions in archives has been saturated with archival studies graduates in recent years. Unfortunately, employment opportunities for traditional archival positions are less abundant than the number of professionals seeking jobs in the field. Due to the lack of full-time, permanent positions, some archivists have chosen to take unique career paths that allow them to utilize their skills and training. This session will feature archival professionals who were able to creatively deploy their expertise in nontraditional settings such as digital media, freelance work, an art historian, and a curator documenting a political movement.

MARAC Roanoke Conference Program  
<https://marac.memberclicks.net/assets/documents/maracvafall2015p8final.pdf>

**Moderator:** Johnathan Thayer, *Queens College, CUNY*

**Speakers:**

Alex Berman, *Rubenstein Technology Group*

Ben Bromley, *RVA Research*

Eden Orelove, *Smithsonian National Anthropological Archives*

Amy Roberts, *Interface and Occupy Wall Street Archives*

At the MARAC conference in Roanoke last fall, recent archives grads who are currently using their skills in other fields spoke about their experiences. We should keep track of where our local interns end up and connect our current interns to archivists who have successfully transitioned to other fields.



As a community,  
we value the diversity  
of backgrounds  
and experiences  
that interns bring  
to the profession.

This internship handbook for the helping professions that I mentioned earlier—it has a whole chapter on working with diversity, mostly from the perspective of serving patients or clients whose experience of the world is different from yours. But it puts the burden on interns. If we want a diverse local archives community, the burden should be on supervisors and mentors to examine our own biases and think about inclusivity in our workplaces.




Giving a keynote is kind of like throwing starfish back into the ocean. I've thrown some ideas out there—maybe some will survive and become real projects in the Philly archives community. Some may turn out to be unworkable, or unrealistic, or just plain silly. And that's okay. I've given you a bunch of answers to the question "how do we fix internships?" and now I want to throw out some questions for discussion.

What role do you play in the  
archives internship ecosystem?  
What role could you play?

As a supervisor,  
what is one thing you can do,  
without additional resources,  
to improve  
the internship experience  
for interns?

Feel free to borrow any of my ideas, but I'd love to hear your own!

What were your experiences  
as an intern  
or internship supervisor  
in other fields?  
What can those experiences  
tell us about improving  
archives internships?

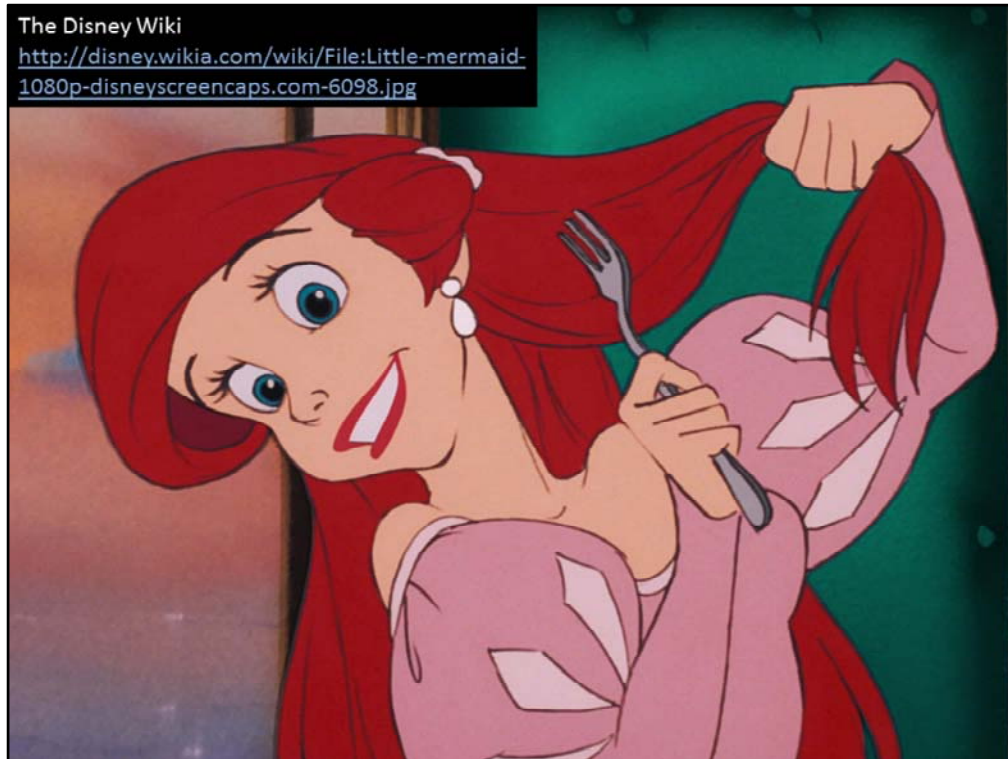


Let's show the other archivists  
how it's done.

Archivists are a risk-averse bunch. If we want to see profession-wide changes in internships, we need to demonstrate success on a small scale. Hey Philly—let's show the other archivists how it's done.



I don't want to finish my talk without acknowledging all the problems I haven't offered any solutions for. I've shared some possible tools for changing how we offer archives internships in our local community.



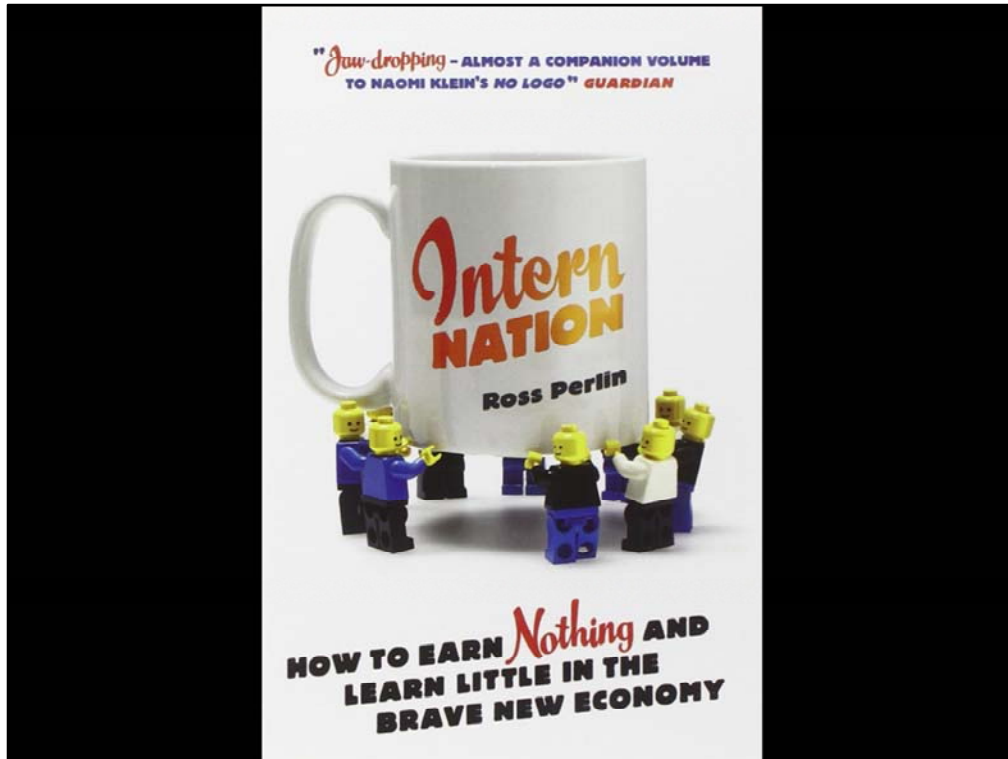
But these aren't solutions for the larger issues affecting archives internships—which are way bigger than archives. We aren't the only field with unpaid internships. We aren't the only field where work experience is expected for entry-level jobs. We aren't the only field with an expensive degree and a low median salary. We aren't the only field looking at the diversity of our membership and finding it lacking. And we aren't the only field that has to constantly explain that yes, we have specialized skills, and yes, we need to be paid for them.



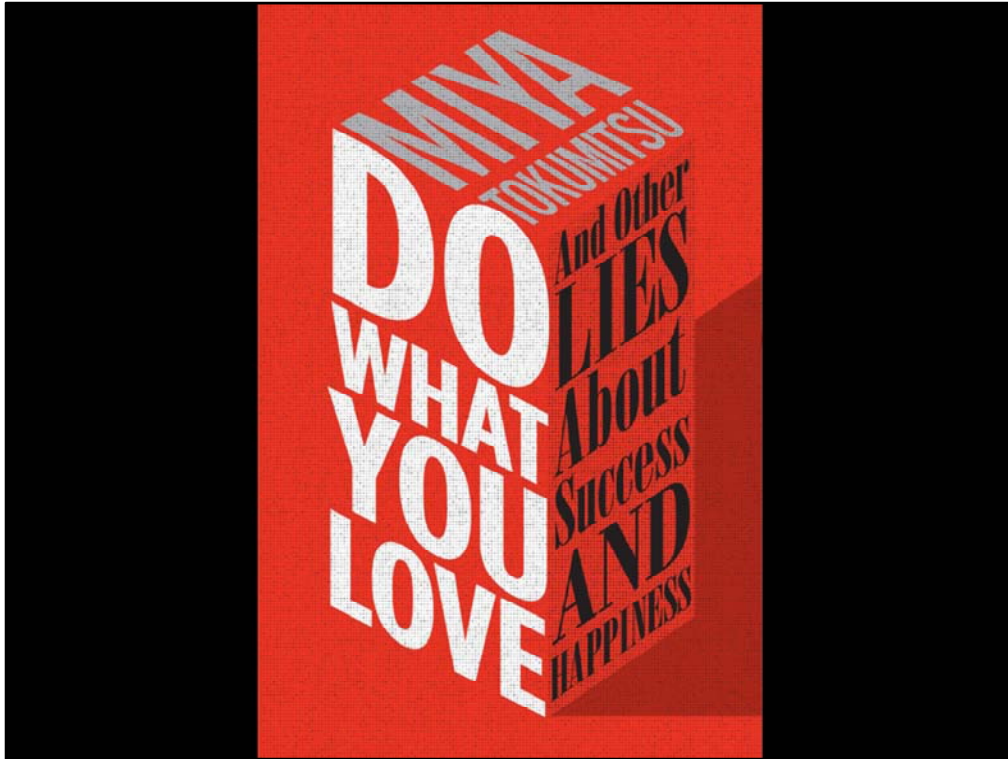


If you want to think bigger about internships, in a very practical way...here's a reading list!

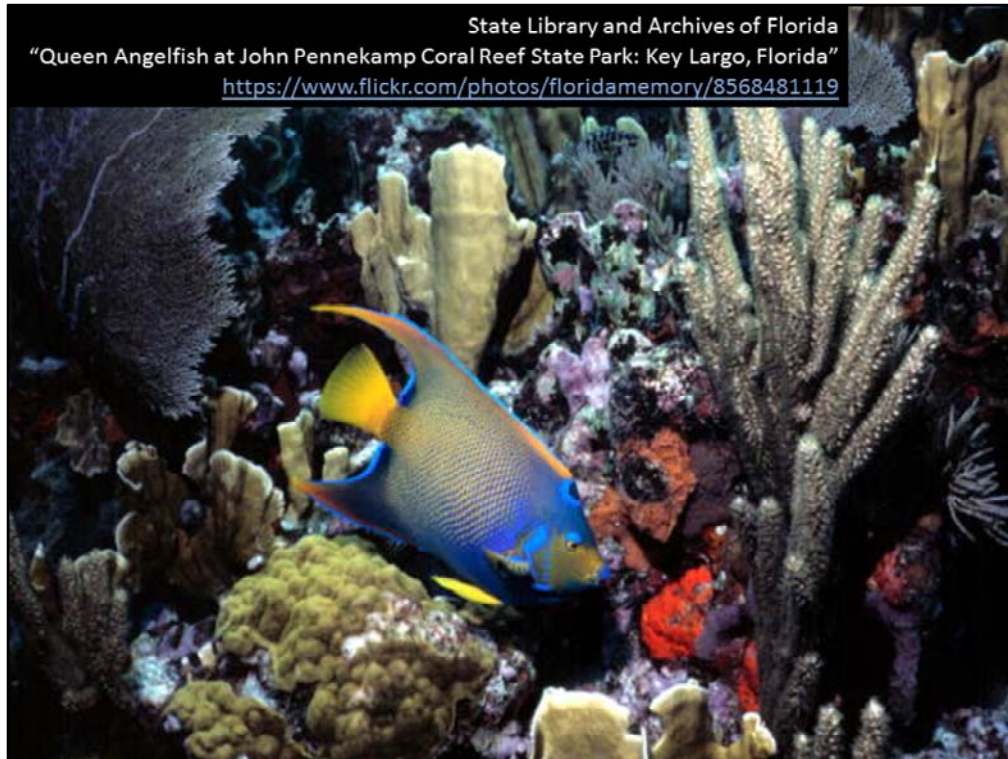




If you want to talk about internships, you have to know the context! Intern Nation talks about how internships started, how they relate to other training programs like apprenticeships, and why they have become so prevalent across many professional fields.



“Do What You Love and other lies about success and happiness.”  
Miya Tokumitsu talks about the dangerous idea that we should all love our jobs, and how this idea is behind the rise in unpaid internships, tiered work systems, and free labor through contributions to online communities—all of which are part of the archives field, and many others. It gives us a framework for looking critically at what it means to love, or not love, the work you do.



In closing: Let's fix what we can in our own community, then think bigger. We're all in this together.

## Special thanks to

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Stacie Williams

A few folks who gave me ideas for my talk



Thank you so much for hosting me today, and I'm so looking forward to continuing the conversation.