

# Directed Field Work (Internship) Proposal: Royal University of Phnom Penh's Hen Sun Library

Prepared by Greg Bem, January 2013

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## Introduction

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I am a 26 year old currently in my second of three years at the University of Washington's iSchool in Seattle, Washington, pursuing a Master's in Library and Information Science (MLIS). This proposal will present to you my interests and experiences, as well as what I hope to gain from an internship at the Hen Sun Library at the Royal University of Phnom Penh.

As a student at the iSchool, I have successfully completed ten classes on libraries and information behavior. I am currently studying Management of Information Organizations, and conducting an independent Study at an Audubon Center in an urban park here in Seattle, in which me and one other student will be installing a library automation system for the Center's library.

Additionally, I am a member of the American Libraries Association (ALA), the Washington Libraries Association (WLA), and I am a student liaison to the Washington Library Media Association (WLMA), which is primarily centered on school librarians. I have been involved in three different student groups and organizations, including the Student American Library Association (SALA), the Association for American Library and Information Science Students (ALISS), and Silverfish, the school's literary magazine. On top of that, I have been involved with two academic research projects pertaining to information behavior and international information networks.

My interests are widely diverse. I am passionate about the core functions of the library (cataloging, circulation, collection development, archiving, patron relations, and library management), as well as technological adaptation and innovation (both through library hardware and within digital spaces on the Internet), community outreach, library networks and consortia, and library marketing, branding, and identity. I look at myself as a library student studying all types of libraries (public, academic, special, and small) and being invested in information access and equality provided to communities of all types.

When it comes to travel experience, I have visited nearly every region of the United States and have lived in rural and urban environments, including towns and cities within Maine, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, and Washington State. I have traveled overseas three times: once to Ireland, once to Japan, and once to Central Europe. Each of these trips was related to family or school, and was only for short time periods. I have never lived abroad, but am excited to use this internship opportunity as a learning experience in doing just that.

In terms of language, I only fluently read, write, and speak English; however, after my experiences in Japan and Central Europe, I discovered a love for language that I look forward to exploring while in Cambodia. I will discuss language later in this proposal.

## Professional Experience and Skills

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Both inside and outside of my academic studies I have obtained professional experience and skills I believe will benefit your library if I am given the opportunity to conduct an internship there. As a former educator of youth, I have experiences working inside classroom and library settings teaching and assisting people of all ages and cultural backgrounds how to make the most out of local resources. I have experience training groups and individuals both online and in person for the purpose of remedial education as well as professional development in a corporate setting.

In 2008 I received my Bachelor's Degree in Creative Writing from Roger Williams University, with two minors in English and Sociology. As a writer, I have since expanded my ambitions to include creating extensive bodies of poetry and critical essays; creating, facilitating, and generating content for personal and professional blogs; conducting interviews with various community stakeholders, artists, and musicians for publication both offline and online; and editing publications for various organizations and institutions.

I am technologically savvy as well. While I do not have significant programming or web development experience, I have taken classes in each and am able to converse with information technology (IT) professionals about specific goals where they relate to user interfaces, usability, database management, metadata, and many other areas of interest to libraries. I have comprehensive experience using image and audio editors, such as Adobe Photoshop and Audition. I have also significant experience working in social and search platform environments for the purpose of marketing and advertising.

Libraries I have been involved with since starting the graduate program include: the Seattle Public Library, the Seattle Aquarium Library, the Ballard Landmark Senior Center, and the Zine Archive and Publishing Project (ZAPP). All of these libraries are here in Seattle, Washington. For each of these libraries I have held distinct roles that relate to the needs of the libraries and the communities the libraries serve.

## Internship Goals

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Because of my extensive interests with libraries of all types and from multiple perspective, I look at this potential internship as being an eye-opening and enlightening experience into a library outside of the United States of America. The ideal internship would accommodate my interests and allow me to see how the library currently broadly functions. The internship would also as provide insight into the history of the library, and allow me to assist in developing and fulfilling the mission for the current goals and future needs of the library.

I have brainstormed and imagined numerous potential projects that could be created for the internship; however, because I do not know the nature of the library or its current state today, I would be most comfortably suited assisting the library's current needs. Projects I have considered and find worth mentioning include learn about and assisting with inter-library communications; website and mobile applications; community networking and library-to-library partnerships; library-to-organization partnerships; collection management and collection policy; international presence; local marketing initiatives; urban and rural library outreach; educational program opportunities; and general library transformation and development for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These ideas, as I have stated, have been initial brainstormed ideas and would most likely serve as catalysts to other, more specific projects the library staff have in mind.

I would like to reinforce the idea that I would prefer an internship that allowed for multiple tasks, projects, and insight rather than one specific project lasting the duration of the internship. I mention this because I have experienced both types of internships in the past and single-project experiences have been less beneficial, educational, and valuable to both me and the organization that I have served. I believe that internship goals would most likely benefit in the form of a consistent conversation between both parties.

## Internship Timeline and Weekly Hours

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The ideal internship would last for four months, from the beginning of September through the end of December of 2013. This time period would nearly fit the Fall Academic Quarter of the iSchool and would match other typical internships in terms of length.

I am already planning on traveling for personal reasons throughout Southeast Asia (specifically Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, and Central Vietnam) for the entire month of August. Ideally I would end my personal travels at the very end of August and fly directly from Vietnam to Phnom Penh to begin the internship the first week of September.

The internship would be considered, in terms of the iSchool, a Directed Field Work (DFW), which means that I would be receiving credit for the internship from the iSchool upon my completion. Specifically, I would receive five credits for 250 hours of work over the four month period. Broken down, that is 62.5 hours per month, which is roughly 16 hours per week. I would be more than happy to volunteer additional time at the library outside of those 16 hours, though I would also plan to take an additional online course through the iSchool at that time, assuming Internet access would be available to conduct my classwork.

In addition to the internship and the extra class, I would hope to take an official Khmer language course, or engage in Khmer language lessons with an individual, throughout those four months. My expectation to learn the language, at least the basics, seems reasonable.

## Additional Activities

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While I do not believe I will be able to work while living in Phnom Penh, I am not against working part time in some capacity for either the library or a similar institution to fill additional hours throughout the week. I did envision the opportunity to teach American English in some capacity as an independent instructor, tutor, or mentor, but would need guidance and advice on establishing that process. Regardless of whether I am able to find any mode of employment or am able to teach or provide professional instruction, I will plan on having appropriate savings to afford four months without pay. That being said, I will need some advice on the cost of living, expenses for housing/living accommodations, the price of food, and local transportation. I will talk about housing more below.

As part of the internship's goal to allow me to experience Cambodian culture, I hope to explore the country on weekends during the four months. By flying and taking buses to other areas of the country, I believe I will be able to get access to other libraries and cultural institutions, and examine the information needs that exist within countless communities. This form of exploration will only benefit the Hen Sun Library as an information source/institution, and will also allow me to grow significantly as a student. The immersion will certainly add to my language goals as well.

Finally, as a writer and poet, I will certainly find many opportunities to reflect on my experiences, and I hope to do so by creating a private travel journal, either hand-written or in the form of a blog. This document, which I would share with my Cambodian peers, could also potentially include interviews and statements from library professionals I have direct working relationships with. By creating such a document, I could establish an institutional relationship between the iSchool and the Royal University that would potentially allow for future internships and aligned projects to emerge.

## Living Needs while in Cambodia

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As mentioned above, I will need assistance in choosing housing that will support me for four months. This would ideally be arranged before my arrival to ensure I am not stranded in a hotel or hostel during my initial introduction to the internship. If I was to live in Cambodia, I would not need much space, and would not plan to bring much with me. If possible, a constant Internet connection would be preferred, but not necessary if there are local Internet cafes available.

One potential idea I did think about was engaging in a “homestay” environment, which would allow me to gain invaluable cultural opportunities via a local family, while providing English lessons or assisting in housing needs if possible. I do not know if this opportunity or model exists in Phnom Penh, but I did entertain it.

I should mention that I do not have any specific medical needs nor am I on any medical prescriptions at this time, and I would take all the necessary precautions through vaccinations far in advance of my travels. I also do not have any food allergies or intolerances.

## Conclusion

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Thank you for reviewing this proposal. I made it as descriptive as possible so as to answer most questions you might have in advance. If there are still questions you have, I am more than happy to answer them via email at [gbem419@uw.edu](mailto:gbem419@uw.edu). I am also available to talk live via Skype if that would be more suitable. As I stated above, this initial document is by no way a plan or vision I have set in stone, but rather a proposed ideal version of what an internship with the Hen Sun Library could look like.

I would love to set a date to solidify this potential internship for peace of mind and for planning purposes. A response by the end of February, 2013, would be greatly appreciated. I look forward to hearing from you and hope that this internship will be of interest to you.

Sincerely,

Greg Bem