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REPORT

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EDITORIAL INTERNSHIP

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Introduction: Editorial Internship at *Western Living & Vancouver*

My practicum placement this fall was with *Western Living* and *Vancouver*. I'd known a couple people from Capilano who had previously interned with the magazines and had positive experiences, and I was interested in writing and editing. Therefore, when a spot for a September internship opened up, I jumped at the chance to join the editorial staff and learn more about magazine publishing. Over the course of my four-month internship, I seized opportunities, became a stronger writer, and applied my School of Communication experience to my work as an editorial intern.

What I Learned

I can divide what I learned into two basic categories: processes and skills.

The processes were the things I learned *about*, what I learned from observing the inner workings of a magazine office. I learned about what goes on during an editorial meeting and a brainstorming session. I learned about the various steps between an idea and a finished, printed piece, like how each piece goes through multiple revisions, fact-checking, copy editing, layout, and reviewing proofs.

This was my first time working with PR professionals, and I came to understand their role in bringing events and organizations to our attention. Interfacing with PR reps from the media side helped me better understand the networks that exist between businesses, photographers, PR reps, and members of the media.

The skills were the things I learned *to do*, what I learned from the tasks I was assigned. Creating content for the web required a host of different skills: photo editing skills to create feature images or edit photos; Wordpress & SEO skills to create a post with headers, links, tags, etc.; and an understanding of what images and titles make a story clickable. Even just creating a roundup built from previous posts, or repackaging magazine content for the web, required me to consider what makes a web post clickable and readable—things like a straightforward but attention-grabbing title, lots of images, and short paragraphs.

I learned to use the internal communication tool Slack, and adapted to working on a Mac. I also learned a lot about revision, both from seeing the evolution of pieces from a first draft to a printed article and from having editors critique my own writing and offer suggestions.

And somewhere between a process and a skill, I learned how to be part of a team. I'm used to working independently, and I've always liked working alone. The open nature of the office, and the nature of magazine publishing, meant a lot more collaboration and socializing than I was used to.

How I Applied My School of Communication Experience

One thing I've always appreciated about Capilano was that, because the classes are small, it was easy to go up to professors and ask questions. And I've learned that talking to my professors almost always makes a big difference in how well I feel I've understood the course. In my internship, I tried to do the same, asking questions and asking for feedback from editors.

The CMNS course most directly related to magazine publishing was Article Writing. This course taught me about terms like head, dek, and lede, how to structure a story and write an article, and—importantly—how to conduct an interview. This course was the first time I learned how to write a profile of an individual, and I applied this knowledge when writing about artist BenG, and again when writing about designer Will Morrison.

While Article Writing helped prepare me to write for publication, my business writing courses helped prepare me for the professional communications I sent. Email was a critical communications tool; in addition to sending out questions for fact checking or sourcing, I emailed individuals, businesses, and PR representatives, reaching out to set up interviews, request photos, or respond to queries. With basic business email etiquette already under my belt, I felt equipped to send and respond to messages in a professional manner.

Stacey's presentation on SEO 101 during the practicum class built on the knowledge of SEO that I had from other courses like Strategic Communications and from personal projects. Additionally, her tips on how to succeed in an internship—receive constructive criticism gracefully, be flexible, take initiative, ask questions—were helpful pieces of advice that I echo in my own advice to future interns.

I was surprised to find that the skills I built in Interpreting Communications Documents, a course which seemed like it would be most applicable in academic circumstances, helped me when I had to do research and fact checking. That course taught me how to search effectively and keep track of my research process—for example, keeping track of search terms I had previously tried and websites I had visited prevented me from retreading the same ground, even when I was working on an assignment over multiple days.

How Prepared I Was For the Tasks

I was nervous about interning at a magazine, because I had little previous experience writing for publications, and I was nervous about interning at *Western Living* and *Vancouver* in particular because of my limited familiarity with the magazines.

I felt prepared for any writing I would be asked to do, because writing has always been one of my strongest skills. In addition to my School of Communication experience, I also had experience writing for the *Capilano Courier*. However, I struggled with the writing in two respects: capturing the voice of the magazines and writing concise blurbs. I worked to improve in these areas, helped immensely by the feedback I got from editors and the chance to make revisions.

My position as an outreach organizer with the Metro Vancouver Alliance (MVA) helped prepare me for the day-to-day office tasks like responding to emails and making phone calls. Prior to my work as an outreach organizer, I had a lot of anxiety around calling, emailing, and meeting people I didn't know, but a summer of reaching out to community groups allowed me to gain confidence in my communications skills. It helped prepare me to take on interviews and other opportunities in this position.

Prior to this internship, I had never worked in an office. Most of my communication-related work for school and the MVA was completed at home. While I can manage my time at home, the office environment took some getting used to. For example, new tasks were always landing on my desk or coming into my inbox, or sometimes a meeting would interrupt me in the middle of something. I had to adjust to this new work setting and prioritize time-sensitive tasks (which was especially important, because unlike classwork, the work didn't end with me, and I needed to finish so that it could be passed on to someone else).

My web experience was a plus; I felt prepared to handle Wordpress posts. While I still learned a lot, my experience with Wordpress and SEO techniques helped me jump in right away. Since I was prepared for the more technical side (editing photos, tagging posts, etc.), I could focus on the writing.

Advice for Future Interns

The next intern to sit at my desk will notice the sticky notes on the monitor telling them how to log in to Slack and what size the feature image on an online post should be. I've slowly filled a note in the Notes app with similarly technical tips – and a few not-so-technical ones.

Know what you want. Are you interested in writing? Do you want to know more about analytics? Are you keen to be present for a photo shoot? Know what you want to get from this experience, and speak up. This is your opportunity to learn as much as you can in a fairly brief time, so don't be afraid to explore. Which reminds me—

Say yes to things. Even the things that make you nervous. One of my goals for my internship was to push myself outside my comfort zone and take advantage of opportunities that sounded interesting, exciting, or fun, even if they were also challenging, stressful, and nervous-making. Some of the most rewarding moments came out of these opportunities. Saying yes to things also means having confidence in your own abilities and pushing yourself to grow.

Think for yourself—but also ask for help. Problem-solving skills and the ability to be self-sufficient are great qualities. But it's also important to remember that you are part of a team. When a problem arises, ask yourself, *Can I figure this out in five minutes or less? Is the answer in my editorial intern survival guide? Is this a question I could Google?* If you can't figure it out yourself reasonably quickly, ask for help. Let someone know if you're struggling with something, or need clarification. Especially during an internship, people understand that you are still learning—don't be too hard on yourself, even if the solution turns out to be simple. The most important thing is honest, open communication.

Know the deadlines and prioritize accordingly. As an editorial intern, you work on a variety of tasks—fact checking, sourcing, interviewing, writing, photo research—and will usually be juggling multiple assignments. Be aware of existing deadlines and ask if you're unsure. Otherwise, you may be caught off guard. Being punctual shows you are professional, organized, and dedicated to your tasks.