



# UBC iSchool

# Experiential Learning

# Tool Kit

A guide for students and host organizations participating in the opportunities available through the Master of Archival Studies (MAS), Master of Library and Information Studies (MLIS) and Dual Master of Archival Studies/Master of Library and Information Studies Degree (MASLIS) programs.

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## INTRODUCTION

The School of Library, Archival and Information Studies at The University of British Columbia (SLAIS the iSchool) offers students a suite of experiential learning courses including, practicums, internships, professional experiences. SLAIS the iSchool is very committed to providing quality experiential learning opportunities for students. To achieve this goal students, experiential learning hosts and the Student Services Coordinator work closely together on establishing placement opportunities. Students are encouraged to carefully consider their options when selecting their experiential learning placements. Although guided by their faculty advisor and aided by the Student Services Coordinator with the selection of placements, they should consider their career prospects or special interests when choosing each placement option.

## EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OPTIONS

All experiential learning options offered through the School are for-credit which means students receive course credit for their placement work. It is a policy of the School that students cannot be compensated for work undertaken during their coursework.

**Practicums** are a two-week placement intended to help inform a student's program of study and give them an opportunity to apply and observe the theory they have absorbed in a real library or informational setting. Comparable to a job-shadow type of experience, students are expected to have a better understanding of how the host information-based organization functions at the end of their two weeks.

*Eligibility* – Students are able to participate in practicum placements after completing the MLIS Core (12 credits); students cannot participate in practicums during their final term.

**Internships** are a 12-week full-time placement for archival students and is viewed by SLAIS as an integral part of a student's program of studies and as an endeavour serving primarily the student's educational goals rather than the hosting organization. It provides students with an opportunity to test the knowledge they have acquired in the first year of archival studies. It may also be regarded as a training exercise in the practices and procedures of the host organization and as an opportunity for professionals in the field to contribute to the formation of future members of their profession.

*Eligibility* – Students must be enrolled in the MAS or DUAL degree program and have completed the MAS Core (12 credits) plus an additional 9 credits of archival coursework.

**Professional Experiences** provide students an opportunity to work on a project in the field, under supervision of an experienced librarian, archivist, or records manager, for course credit. Students spend 120 hours on the project, equivalent to the time they are expected to spend on a regular course. The project is typically carried out over a 12-week term, but it can be condensed into a shorter time frame if that is agreeable to both the student and the supervisor. Projects spanning more than a term are also permitted, though students may not significantly exceed 120 hours in total work.

*Eligibility* – Students from the MAS, MLIS and Dual degree programs can participate in this course after completion of Core coursework plus any courses relevant to the nature of the project as identified by the host organization.

This manual and all relevant information and documentation is available from the iSchool website: <http://slais.ubc.ca/community/community-learning/experiential-learning-information/experiential-learning-documents/>

## REQUIREMENTS FOR PLACEMENT

Placements may be in any library, records management, archive or information environment where the student can be given supervision by a credentialed information professional. This organization member will be called the Host. Placements are not permitted in organizations who do not have the above mentioned professionals; except in exceptional circumstances where the staff member has had extensive management experience within the field of study.

Before organizing a placement, the School considers the suitability of the organization and the educational experience they are proposing. For all experiential learning opportunities offered by the School students are encouraged to suggest possible placements; however, consultation will take place between the student and Student Services Coordinator to ensure the most appropriate choice is made.

For the majority of placement opportunities students are required to work the normal hours of the institution in which they are placed. However, for the professional experience (LIBR/ARST 596) hours may be arranged to suit the student and the Host. Duties will be arranged in consultation with the host organization, the student and the Student Services Coordinator. Host service holidays are taken as holidays by the student. The practicum and internship placements are a full-time commitment except in exceptional circumstances.

Students will NOT be given a placement in an organization with which they have a current or prior working relationship unless an agreement between the School and the Host can be reached. This means students cannot do a placement in their current workplace, even if this occurs outside the hours of paid employment. Previous experience in these situations has shown that students and employers at times find it difficult to distinguish between the placement and work. Also, it is considered important that students gain a breadth of experience, have an opportunity to work in different types of organization and be exposed to different organizational cultures.

It is the responsibility of the student to alert the Student Services Coordinator to any potential breaches of this requirement.

## POSSIBLE PLACEMENT LOCATIONS

The SSC will work with students to organize placements for any location chosen in the world. The iSchool has contact with many information services and professionals throughout British Columbia, Canada, and around the world.

Students planning on travelling outside of British Columbia or Canada are asked to get their applications in as early as possible to ensure enough time for the Student Services Coordinator to organize the placement.

Students are responsible for all costs related to travel to and from any experiential learning placement including accommodation and are encouraged to carefully consider their ability to meet the financial expectations of such a placement.

Please review insurance requirements for placements outside of B.C.

## PROCEDURES FOR ORGANIZING PLACEMENTS – FIVE EASY STEPS

This manual provides students with procedures for the organization and completion of each course within the School's experiential learning program. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that they check the procedures and are able to meet the requirements for the course.

### Professional Experience

#### *Step 1: Submitting a Project Proposal*

There are two ways to submit project proposals

**Project Types:** Organizations hosting our students for a professional experience are strongly encouraged to consider the following about the project:

Projects should have considerable intellectual, analytical and critical challenge of a professional nature, and with some definable outcome.

Students should be able to carry out the project work with considerable degree of independence.

Ideally projects should be designed to be completed in the estimated 120 hours as required to receive course credit.

A professional librarian or archivist must agree to supervise the student.

Organizations without a credentialed professional on site may use an external consultant who meets the School's requirements. These will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

Community organizations submit a project proposal (<http://slais.ubc.ca/community/community-learning/>)

All project proposals are reviewed by the UBC iSchool Student Services Coordinator (SSC) for approval. Approved projects are posted to students on the [iSchool News Blog](#), under the category Professional Experience.

Students can coordinate a project with a community organization on their own. The organization will then submit the proposal (applications not required as project is pre-arranged)

For projects without a pre-arranged student, students will apply for with both resume and cover letter by email to the Student Services Coordinator ([ischool.ssc@ubc.ca](mailto:ischool.ssc@ubc.ca))

Upon receipt of student application the SSC will:

Send student documentation to the host

For projects with multiple applications the School will send applications as a batch, or as they come in depending on the stated preference of the host organization.

### *Step 2: Approval, request for Project Plan*

Once a project proposal has been approved by the SSC, a request will be made for a project plan. The plan must include the following:

- a timeline, including anticipated start and end dates
- allocation of hours along the way, specific milestones and deliverables for the project
- due dates for the two student interim reports, at the 40-hour and 80-hour mark, approximately
- due date for the one supervisor interim report, at the halfway point
- due dates for the student final report and supervisor and final survey, after completion of the project.

### *Step 3: Commencement of Project*

The SSC will confirm approval of the Project Plan to both the supervisor and student.

Students can begin working on the project according to the timeline established in the Project Plan.

Note: Students participating in the Internship course in British Columbia are covered by WCB (<http://www.riskmanagement.ubc.ca/health-safety/accidentsincidents-ubc/worksafefbc-coverage-practicumclinical-placement-students>)

Students are required to purchase insurance for non-BC placements through [UBC Risk Management](#)

### *Step 4: Communication and Reporting*

As identified in the Project Plan, students are required to submit two interim reports and one final report as part of their course requirements. These are used as markers to determine how the project is progressing according to the Project Plan.

Supervisors are required to submit one interim report and complete a final survey to assess the status of the project.

Students and supervisors who encounter any issues do not need to wait for these reporting dates to contact the SSC.

Links to the report templates can be found here: <http://slais.ubc.ca/community/community-learning/experiential-learning-information/experiential-learning-documents/>

### *Step 5: Project Completion*

Projects are complete when both the student final report and the supervisor final survey have been submitted.

The SSC signs off on the completion of the project and enters a Pass or Fail for the student

## Practicum

Organizations are not expected to post practicum experience options. Students apply through the School to participate in this placement option.

Organizations will be contacted directly by the Student Services Coordinator with a request for practicum placements.

### *Step 1: Applying for a Practicum placement*

Students wishing to complete a practicum placement must submit a [practicum application form](#)

Organizations are not expected to post practicum experience options. Students apply through the School to participate in this placement option.

*Step 2: Contacting Community Organization*

The Student Services Coordinator (SSC) contacts the organizations chosen by the student in the order they are ranked.

The initial request will be via email and will include the following:

- Name and program of student – can be students in the MLIS or DUAL MASLIS degree
- Dates of expected placement
- Practicum placements occur during the two weeks following the last scheduled day of term; April, August, December.
- Interest areas of students
- An attached cover letter and CV

Note: The SSC cannot guarantee a placement for a student. Should the initial three options for placement not be successful the SSC will contact the student to consider additional placement opportunities.

*Step 3: Practicum Work Plan and Insurance*

Upon successful coordination of a practicum placement the student is connected with the Host Organization are expected to create a work plan for the students' two-week placement.

The work plan should aim to provide the student with a better understanding of how the organization functions.

Note: Students participating in the Practicum course in British Columbia are covered by WCB (<http://www.riskmanagement.ubc.ca/health-safety/accidentsincidents-ubc/worksafebc-coverage-practicumclinical-placement-students>)

Students may also purchase insurance for non-BC placements through [UBC Risk Management](#)

*Step 4: Communication and Commencement of Practicum*

Practicum placements commences as per agreed upon dates

The Student Services Coordinator will contact the student and host mid-way through the placement

Students and supervisors who encounter any issues should contact the SSC as they arise

*Step 5: Practicum Completion*

Upon completion of the practicum placement students are expected to write a 500 word reflection.

This reflection should include:

- Summary of activities including tasks and observation sessions completed and value to the student
- A brief description of any problems or issues encountered during the placement
- Recommendations for improvement for the School and future students who participate in the placement

A template can be found here – <http://slais.ubc.ca/community/community-learning/experiential-learning-information/experiential-learning-documents/>

Practicum hosts will be sent a brief survey to provide feedback on the practicum placement.

## Internship

### *Step 1: Applying for an Internship*

There are two possible ways of setting up and internship

Community organizations submit an internship proposal (<http://slais.ubc.ca/community/community-learning/>). The proposal is posted to the iSchool Jobs Blog where students will apply by submitting a cover letter and resume to the Student Services Coordinator ([ischool.ssc@ubc.ca](mailto:ischool.ssc@ubc.ca)). Skip to Step 3

Students complete the internship application form and choose three possible placement locations

### *Step 2: Contacting Community Organizations*

The Student Services Coordinator (SSC) contacts the organizations chosen by the student in the order they are ranked.

The initial request will be via email and will include the following:

- Name and program of student – can be students in the MLIS or DUAL MASLIS degree
- Dates of expected placement
- Internships usually cover 12 consecutive weeks and are associated with UBC academic terms, Jan – April, May - July
- Interest areas of students
- An attached cover letter and CV

The SSC cannot guarantee an internship for a student. Should the initial three options for internship placements not be successful the SSC will contact the student to consider additional internship opportunities.

### *Step 3: Internship Work Plan and Insurance*

Upon successful coordination of an Internship placement the student is connected with the Host Organization who are then expected to create a work plan for the students' twelve-week placement. This plan is submitted to the SSC and assigned iSchool faculty supervisor.

The work plan is expected to offer the student an experience of the entire range of basic functions carried out within the organization by professional records managers and archivists.

In archival institutions or programs, this would include experience of appraisal, acquisition, accessioning, arrangement, description, basic preservation, and reference service. In organizations or units where the work focuses on current records, the intern might gain experience of records inventorying, scheduling, records registration, records classification, access clearance or response to access requests, records disposal, or user service. Please see the Internship Guidelines for more information.

Note: Students participating in the Internship course in British Columbia are covered by WCB (<http://www.riskmanagement.ubc.ca/health-safety/accidentsincidents-ubc/worksafebc-coverage-practicumclinical-placement-students>)

Students are required to purchase insurance for non-BC placements through [UBC Risk Management](#)

#### *Step 4: Communication and Commencement of Internship*

Internships commence as per agreed upon dates, usually January-April or May-August

The faculty supervisor will contact the student and host mid-way through the placement

Students and supervisors who encounter any issues should contact the faculty supervisor as they arise

#### *Step 5: Internship Completion*

Upon completion of the Internship students are expected to write a 2500 word report assessing the internship as a learning experience.

This report should include:

- An account of the mandate or responsibility of the institution, organization or unity where the intern worked;
- An account of the activities or projects the intern carried out; and
- An assessment of how well the intern was prepared for each task carried out.

A template can be found here – <http://slais.ubc.ca/community/community-learning/experiential-learning-information/experiential-learning-documents/>

Internship hosts will be sent a brief survey to provide feedback on the placement

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ENSURING A SUCCESSFUL PLACEMENT

The development and support of an experiential learning opportunity is often a complex task so we have created a list to clarify the levels of responsibility for different aspects of the practicum.

*The Student Services Coordinator is responsible for:*

- Preparing experiential learning material
- Updating forms and web sites relating to experiential learning courses.
- Organizing the placement with the student and the organization host.
- Ensuring Hosts are aware of insurance coverage for the student through the University
- Ensuring experiential learning hosts and students are contacted during the placement.
- Managing assessment and evaluation of the student.

The initial communication with the experiential learning host is normally done by the Student Services Coordinator; except when students have arranged their own professional experience placement. This arrangement is in place to ensure that the host organization can be informed of the placement arrangement, and to ensure no other prior commitments by the organization will interfere with the students learning opportunity.

*The student is responsible for:*

- Completing the relevant forms required for the organization of the placement.
- Planning the placement with the Student Services Coordinator.
- Liaising with the placement host concerning the placement.
- Discussing with the placement host, or other organizational staff, ideas for their placement-related plan (if applicable).
- Contributing to the work of the host organization.

- Reporting any problems, as soon as possible, to the placement host and/or the Student Services Coordinator.
- Writing a letter of thanks at the end of the placement to the placement hosts.
- Submitting reports relating to the placement (if applicable).

*Additionally, the student is expected to:*

- Be able to communicate in a professional manner with staff and clients.
- Undertake the placement without remuneration.
- Work the hours assigned by the placement host.
- Treat all staff with respect and consideration.
- Present him or herself in a professional manner.
- Act ethically and responsibly with the host organization, staff and clients.
- Observe the host organization's dress code.
- Undertake all duties assigned to them during the placement.
- Observe public holidays taken by the host organization.
- Notify the placement host at the beginning of the working day in cases of ill health. A medical certificate must be produced for any sick leave of more than two days.
- Report to the Student Services Coordinator any significant loss of time at the placement site due to illness or other problems so that decisions can be made about whether or not the student should make up this time.

The placement host is responsible for:

- Submitting potential placement opportunities for students.
- Reviewing student applications for placements and approving the placement for the student
- Coordinating with the student and Student Services Coordinator to create the placement project plan.
- Organizing the work schedule for the student. This schedule should cover the range of activities outlined within the project plan. At all levels, depending on the work environment, some non-professional tasks may be undertaken.
- Providing guidance by giving the student a thorough orientation to the workplace and integrating the student into the work environment and culture. Offering guidance in the selection and management of a practicum project. This project should be of benefit to both the host organization and the student.
- Alerting the Student Services Coordinator, as soon as possible, should any issues arise that may impact on the success of the placement, or the student's performance
- Ensuring the student has regular feedback on his or her performance during the placement, including an interim and final report.

### iSchool's Expectations of Students

Each experiential learning placement is an integral part of a student's degree program and is an opportunity for students to experience and understand the realities of working in an information service, to observe and learn the positive qualities and the constraints and limitations of the host organization, and to put into practice the skills and knowledge already acquired at the School. However, please note the constraints and limitations under which the host organization operates and remember there may be sound, if not immediately obvious, reasons for certain decisions and procedures. Do not be too hasty to judge!

Placements are an important learning experience. Do not be afraid to ask for instructions to be repeated if they are unclear the first time. It also helps if students have realistic expectations of the placement.

Students should take time to reflect on both the theory and practice of professionalism and the ethics and ethos of the workplace, and should develop a thorough knowledge of the operation of the information service and the activities undertaken in providing services to users.

The best way to make the most of your experiential learning placement is as follows:

- be open and receptive to new experiences and ideas
- accept and respect the host service by trying to understand their role and purpose and the constraints and limitations, under which it works
- be positive and confident without being aggressive
- connect the concepts and principles learnt in the course to the practices undertaken at the host organization
- carefully observe and reflect on professional issues; comparison with the situation encountered in prior practicums or other work experience will provide the basis for new perceptions discuss issues of concern with your placement host and other professional staff

## PLACEMENT ISSUES

### Prior to commencing an experiential learning course

#### *Financial expectation*

Students are required to meet any expenses associated in the participation in an experiential learning course (i.e. travel, accommodation, etc.)

Students cannot be paid for their work during an experiential learning placement.

#### *Criminal Record Check/Security Clearance*

Students may be required to obtain security clearance and/or criminal record checks before being allowed to undertake a placement. Should students have problems with this request please contact the Student Services Coordinator before beginning the placement.

#### *Placement Agreements and Insurance*

SLAIS the iSchool at The University of British Columbia will require a written agreement for all experiential learning courses. This agreement identifies and describes the responsibilities of the University, the host and students in the course. The agreement outlines information on insurance provisions provided by the University to all parties prior to commencing the placement. This agreement is completed prior to the commencement of the placement in consultation with the Student Services Coordinator.

Students engaging in an experiential learning course within the province of British Columbia are covered via WorkSafeBC if they experience work-related illness or injury while doing their practicum. Details on coverage can be found here: <http://rms.ubc.ca/health-safety/student-safety/practicumclinical-placement-student-safety/>

Placements outside of British Columbia will require students to purchase student insurance through UBC Risk Management. Details on obtaining that insurance can be found here: [\(http://rms.ubc.ca/insurance/insurance-programs/student-insurance-optional/\)](http://rms.ubc.ca/insurance/insurance-programs/student-insurance-optional/)

Students are asked to complete the following form via the iSchool website to obtain the UBC Risk Management insurance coverage. The iSchool office will process the insurance request before the student commences their placement. <http://resources.slais.ubc.ca/2016/01/10/student-risk-insurance-form/>

Any other issues that may arise including last minute placement cancellations should be brought to the attention of the Student Services Coordinator as soon as possible.

## During an experiential learning course

### *Personal problems*

It is the student's responsibility to notify their Placement Supervisor and the Student Services Coordinator if illness prevents attendance at the placement. It is mandatory, as well as courteous, to telephone such information first thing in the morning and follow up with an email. A medical certificate must be presented if you are absent from work or more than two days through illness. Should other matters intrude on the placement it is best to contact the Student Services Coordinator. In certain circumstances the placement may have to be aborted. Decisions concerning whether or not the student may have to make up time resulting from illness or any other absence from work will be made at the discretion of the Placement Supervisor and the Student Services Coordinator. It is best to contact the Student Services Coordinator as soon as a problem arises so that decisions can be made as quickly as possible.

### *Change of placement request*

Although rare, at times placements are not successful. A student showing due cause can request to be transferred from a placement at any time without penalty. Any request for a change to another placement during the course of an experiential learning course must be discussed initially with the Student Services Coordinator. Any decision must be acceptable to all parties, including the Placement Supervisor. While there may be a variety of reasons for students requesting a change of placement, a situation where the student is not coping with the environment or the work cannot be judged sufficient cause to find a second placement. Inability to function in a work environment means failure of the placement

A Placement Supervisor may also request the removal of a student. In such a case the situation is assessed by the Student Services Coordinator and the iSchool Graduate Advisor, and the student may be allocated another placement or fail the practicum.

The Student Services Coordinator may also remove a student from a placement if it is felt that the placement is not successful, either from the perspective of the student or the supervisor. This is only done in consultation with the parties concerned. Such decisions are not taken lightly and every situation is very carefully assessed. Reasons for problems with a practicum may be incompatibility between student and mentor; poor scheduling of duties so that the student does not receive the appropriate work experience; complaints from supervisors about the student which could include idleness, lack of enthusiasm, poor communication skills, an inability to work successfully with staff and clients, poor presentation in the work-place, and a lack of appropriate skills and knowledge.

**NOTE: FAILURE OF A PLACEMENT WILL REQUIRE A STUDENT TO 'MAKE UP' THE PLACEMENT COURSE. PROFESSIONAL COURSES REQUIRE THAT GRADUATES BE ABLE TO FUNCTION IN A PROFESSIONAL**

CAPACITY WITH GOOD COMMUNICATION SKILLS, ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE AND A PROFESSIONAL ETHOS.

## EVALUATION

All experiential learning placements are pass/fail. A pass grade is awarded when the agreed upon terms of the project are met and upon submission of all of the required written reports for the student and supervisor.

All students must be able to demonstrate that they have managed to relate class learning to operational experience in their placement course.

## ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

All students must be able to demonstrate that they have managed to relate class learning to operational experience in their host service. In addition, students must also be able to demonstrate that they have a sound grasp of both the theory and practice of the relevant area of study and the requisite skills and knowledge to become practitioners.

Each experiential learning course requires evaluations to be completed through self-assessment and supervisor reporting. These reports are used by the Student Services Coordinator to determine if the student has successfully completed their placement.

### Evaluation of the student by the Placement Supervisor

Assessment will include an evaluation of the student's performance by the Placement Supervisor. Students are encouraged to read this form prior to the placement as it will form part of your assessment for the placement.

Students are asked to discuss their evaluations with their Placement Supervisors at the conclusion of the placement and, if possible, provide the student with a copy at this time; for internships and practicums students may share their final narrative reports. The School asks that Placement Supervisors also share their final evaluations with students for discussion. However, it may not be possible or convenient for the supervisor to finalize the evaluation by the end of the placement period.

If students do not receive evaluation feedback at the conclusion of the placement, or from the Placement Supervisor at a later date, they will be able to request a copy from the Student Services Coordinator

### Evaluation of Student Placement by Student Services Coordinator

For all placements, the Student Services Coordinator will contact Placement Supervisors via email to check on the progress of students and the project. If possible, students will be contacted at these times as well.

If possible, visits or virtual meetings can be arranged at the request of either the student or the Placement Supervisor. For In all cases, Placement Supervisors and students may contact the Student Services Coordinator as often as necessary throughout the placement.

### Student evaluation of the placement

Students must complete an evaluation of the placement and the placement process; in some placements reporting is required at specified times during a placement. This helps the School to plan future placements and also gives the Student Services Coordinator feedback on the suitability of the

organization for future student placements. Perhaps, more importantly, self- reflection is an important part of professional development.

The Student Evaluation forms are available from the UBC iSchool website and must be submitted within one to two weeks of the completion of the placement.

Note: Submission of the evaluations from both student and supervisor is a requirement for successful completion of the practicum.

### [Student and Supervisor Assessment of Placement](#)

Students have both the opportunity to evaluate, and are themselves evaluated during each course in a number of ways.

#### *Assessment of Professional Experience:*

Students are required to submit two interim progress reports during their professional experience placement and one final report.

Interim Report Template: [Student Interim Report Form](#)

Final Report Template: [Student Final Report Form](#)

Supervisors are required to submit one interim progress report, and will be sent a brief survey upon completion of the placement to assist the Student Services Coordinator with evaluation of the student's placement.

Supervisor Interim Report Template: [Supervisor Interim Report](#)

Supervisor Final Survey Link: [Supervisor Final Survey](#)

#### *Assessment of Practicum Placement*

Students are required to submit a 500 word report upon the completion of their practicum placement. This report can be submitted online via the iSchool resource site.

Practicum report template: [Student Final Practicum Report](#)

Supervisors will be asked to complete a short survey to provide feedback on the students' performance during their practicum placement.

Supervisor survey: [Supervisor Final Survey](#)

#### *Assessment of Internship*

Each intern is asked to submit a report of about 2500 words (10 pages) assessing the Internship as a learning experience.

The report should include:

1. an account of the mandate or responsibility of the institution, organization or unit where the intern worked;
2. an account of the activities or projects the intern carried out; and
3. an assessment of how well the intern was prepared by studies in the MAS for each task carried out.

The intern should attach to the report a copy of any written work, such as a finding aid, report, reference letter, etc.

Supervisors will be asked to complete a short survey to provide feedback on the students' performance during their Internship placement.

Supervisor survey: [Supervisor Internship Final Survey](#)

## STUDENT SERVICES COORDINATOR

The Student Services Coordinator is:

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## THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

The School of Library, Archival and Information Studies (SLAIS the iSchool) would like to sincerely thank all of our community partners who donate their time and expertise to our students during their placements. We could not provide these experience without your commitment to supporting future information professionals and we hope the experience is as beneficial for the organization as it is for the student.