

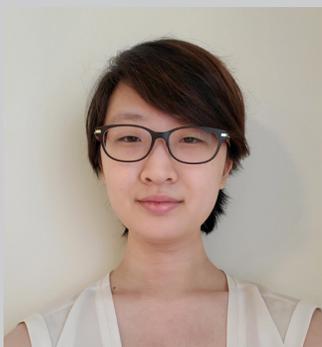


MASTER OF ARTS IN PROFESSIONAL WRITING

Internship Report

2020

Carnegie Mellon University
English



Abby Cho

MA in Professional Writing (May. '21)

Junior Technical Writer, Summer 2020

Hometown: Annandale, VA

Internship Type:

- paid
- unpaid

Applied by:

April

Accepted by:

May

Internship Category:

- corporate communication
- editing & publishing
- grant writing / fundraising
- healthcare communication
- information architecture
- journalism and news media
- non-profit communication
- public relations & marketing
- science writing
- technical writing
- user experience strategy
- writing for multimedia

What skills did you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?

I think ultimately what helped me the most was getting involved in a variety of technical subjects outside of writing. I had some experience with mathematics and physics, for example, which really helped when meeting with the team working on radiation detection at Two Six.

What skills did you strengthen or learn at your internship?

I definitely learned how to best translate very hard subjects into digestible material for general audiences. I also learned very quickly to ask as many questions as possible. This may seem obvious, but especially when the team's work is very technical, it's not only important to the written work, it's important to the team members. They really appreciate when you're making an effort to understand hard subjects.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?

I applied to Two Six Labs via LinkedIn and landed an interview. I had been sending out my resume to everywhere I could around that time.

What did you do as an intern at Company Name?

I mostly worked with one team and essentially took care of almost everything that had to do with words. I updated their user manuals, put together monthly reports, and wrote the final report after the contract was complete. I also did company-wide tasks, such as editing blog posts written by staff members and looking over company documents.

What was challenging about your internship?

There were lots of teams doing different things at different times, so the greatest struggle was catching up on a team's history, who everyone is, and getting to know what they did.

What did you enjoy about your internship?

The most fun thing about Two Six was how cutting edge their projects were, so what I enjoyed most was getting to learn and experience those projects firsthand.

What advice do you have for students interested in this field?

« *Be curious and be confident. There are truly no bad questions. Experts in the field are always happy to talk about what they're working on, and it's your job to know and transfer their great ideas to the page. Getting familiar with different subjects can only help you.*





Melissa Curtis

MA in Professional Writing (Dec. '20)

Technical Writer Intern, Summer 2020

Hometown: Sydney, Australia

Internship Type:

- paid
- unpaid

Applied by:

September 2019

Accepted by:

October 2019

Internship Category:

- corporate communication
- editing & publishing
- grant writing / fundraising
- healthcare communication
- information architecture
- journalism and news media
- non-profit communication
- public relations & marketing
- science writing
- technical writing
- user experience strategy
- writing for multimedia

What skills did you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?

Before joining the MAPW program I worked in tech recruitment, so I am experienced in tailoring application materials (resume, portfolio, cover letter etc) for best reception from recruiters and hiring managers. For Salesforce specifically, I have professional experience working with their products. This gave me a unique understanding of their customers, which I was able to speak to in the interview.

What skills did you strengthen or learn at your internship?

In this role, I greatly strengthened my collaboration skills. My team consisted of about ten tech writers located in different parts of the US, all working remotely on the same product offering. There were many complex processes to master to manage documents and collaborate effectively on projects.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?

Prepare early. When opportunities come along, you want to be ready to take advantage of them. Research the kind of roles you want, network with alumni and recruiters at those companies, and tailor your application materials with the help of the careers department.

What did you do as an intern at Company Name?

My projects included writing training modules, producing training videos, and writing software docs. I also did some versioning/document management.

What was challenging about your internship?

Salesforce is a HUGE company with many different product offerings. The tools and processes used to manage those products are specialised and complex. Learning to use them effectively was challenging, but VERY rewarding.

What did you enjoy about your internship?

Working with a team, learning new technologies and having ownership of impactful projects.

What advice do you have for students interested in this field?

« *Innovation fuels the tech sector. The industry is constantly growing and changing as companies compete to redefine the 'bleeding edge'. If you want to work in tech, be prepared to learn every day and accept that you will never know everything.*





Alexandra Faccenda

MA in Professional Writing (Dec. '20)

Technical Writing Intern, Summer 2020
Hometown: Downingtown, PA

Internship Type:

- paid
 unpaid

Applied by:

September

Accepted by:

December

Internship Category:

- corporate communication
 editing & publishing
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 healthcare communication
 information architecture
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 science writing
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What skills did you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?

Strong research, analysis, and synthesis skills. In other words, I demonstrated that I knew how to learn about a complex topic, break it into simple elements, and use those elements to build user-friendly documentation.

What skills did you strengthen or learn at your internship?

I got comfortable with tech writing software, like help authoring tools and version control systems. I also learned how to script and storyboard an instructional video!

What are the steps you took to land your internship?

Salesforce recruits technical writing interns from CMU, so I attended an on-campus info session and signed up for a same-day interview.

What did you do as an intern at Salesforce?

I "owned" a section of online help content for a security feature, so I was responsible for rewriting and restructuring this section. I wrote about how the security feature works and taught Salesforce administrators how to set it up. I also created a short "how-to" video for a specific implementation of the feature.

What was challenging about your internship?

I knew nothing about the subject matter, so I filled my knowledge gaps by researching independently and asking a ton of questions. I also struggled to empathize with my audience at first, but I improved with time.

What did you enjoy about your internship?

I took a deep dive into a challenging topic. Sometimes, it felt like it took hours to write a paragraph. But it was incredibly rewarding when I finally felt satisfied with my work. I also enjoyed the company culture at Salesforce. I found the environment very open and stimulating, even though it was virtual.

What advice do you have for students interested in this field?

“ Be brave and tackle technical concepts that scare you. If people tell you that something is hard to learn or write about, throw yourself into the challenge. By taking on work that few people want to do, you make yourself more valuable to a company. ”



Jennifer Gray

MA in Professional Writing (Dec. '20)

Editorial Intern, Summer 2020

Hometown: Carlton, OR

Internship Type:

- paid
- unpaid

Applied by:

March

Accepted by:

April

Internship Category:

- corporate communication
- editing & publishing
- grant writing / fundraising
- healthcare communication
- information architecture
- journalism and news media
- non-profit communication
- public relations & marketing
- science writing
- technical writing
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What skills did you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?

Previous experience is deeply important in publishing. Through connections at CMU, I had a prior internship that allowed me to enter the interviewing process with greater knowledge of the industry. Additionally, it is vital to be aware of current publishing trends relevant to the literary agency's genre.

What skills did you strengthen or learn at your internship?

I further refined my knowledge and editorial skills by working with manuscripts in the genre I hope to work with in the future.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?

I reached out to a literary agent I interned with in the spring to find websites that posted openings for editing and publishing such as Bookjobs.com and also checked the acknowledgments page of all books I was reading to look up their literary agencies and publishers to check for posting on their websites. I applied to approximately 15-20 job openings.

What did you do as an intern at Massie & McQuilkin?

I read unsolicited queries, reviewed submitted manuscripts for agents, and attended weekly online meetings with agents speaking about different aspects of publishing.

What was challenging about your internship?

A few manuscripts I read received offers of representation from other literary agents, requiring an expedited reading and review process.

What did you enjoy about your internship?

I enjoyed working with multiple agents, allowing me to see a variety of ways to approach agenting.

What advice do you have for students interested in this field?

“ Publishing is an exceptionally difficult field to get a foothold in. Be prepared to apply to many positions, receive many rejection letters, and reach out to as many connections as possible. Editorial skills and market knowledge are important, but timing and connections mean even more. ”



Steve Helinski

MA in Professional Writing (Dec. '20)

Technical Writer, Summer 2020

Hometown: Pittsburgh, PA

Internship Type:

- paid
 unpaid

Applied by:

March

Accepted by:

May

Internship Category:

- corporate communication
 editing & publishing
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What skills did you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?

I believe that the skills I learned in Document and Information Design played a large role in securing the internship. I had several formatted portfolio pieces that set me apart from other applicants and gave the employer a better understanding of what I could offer the company.

What skills did you strengthen or learn at your internship?

I gained insight on working with subject matter experts and collaborating with people from different fields.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?

The internship was passed to the MAPW department by someone associated with Optimus. I introduced myself to them and the company and forwarded my resume, cover letter, and portfolio of work.

What did you do as an intern at Optimus?

The internship primarily focused on creating technical manuals and user guides for the company. I also worked on a variety of projects, including press releases, promotional materials, web design, graphic design, and proposal writing.

What was challenging about your internship?

It was difficult to gain an in-depth understanding of the more complex parts of the company's biodiesel system with just a 3-month internship. It did help that Optimus is a small startup, and that I was able to speak directly to engineers to work through this.

What did you enjoy about your internship?

As a startup, there were many opportunities for me to make creative decisions. I was treated as an equal in the process and was trusted to develop a plan in creating manuals and other writing projects.

What advice do you have for students interested in this field?

« Especially with a tech field, I think it's important to build a diverse set of skills that complement your writing. Take a variety of courses and always be open to discovering new ways to approach problems.





MEREDITH MARSH

MA in Professional Writing (May '22)

EX-CHANGE Editorial Internship, Summer 2020

Hometown: Pittsburgh, PA

Internship Type:

- paid
- unpaid

Applied by:

December

Accepted by:

December

Internship Category:

- corporate communication
- editing & publishing
- grant writing / fundraising
- healthcare communication
- information architecture
- journalism and news media
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- public relations & marketing
- science writing
- technical writing
- user experience strategy
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What skills did you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?

My role as the Marketing & Communications Manager in the School of Architecture gives me the necessary familiarity with the subject matter of this publication, which documents the work of the SoA from first year undergraduate to PhD.

What skills did you strengthen or learn at your internship?

I strengthened my teamwork and project management skills, as well as learning better how to have compassion for myself and my expectations of my work in difficult circumstances.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?

I have had a working relationship with the director of the project, a fellow staff member, and expressed my interest in becoming more involved on the project and we made it happen.

What did you do as an intern at Carnegie Mellon School of Architecture?

As the EX-CHANGE catalog editor, I was responsible for project managing the development of the publication. I also copyedited, proofread, and marketed the final publication, as well as conducted interviews, wrote original news content, and coordinated with the printer for quotes and proofs.

What was challenging about your internship?

The challenging part about this internship was the external factors brought about by the pandemic, which added considerable work to my regular job responsibilities, and additional challenges to the development of a printed publication.

What did you enjoy about your internship?

I enjoyed the collaborative nature of working closely with students, faculty, and other staff members on this project. Usually the publication was only something I would give a last set of eyes to before it went to print, but this time I was involved from the initial planning all the way to the release of the printed publication. It's amazing to see that process through every step of the way, to watch how a publication gets from idea to reality.

What advice do you have for students interested in this field?

“ Get as much experience as you can working on as many different aspects of a project as you can. Get your hands dirty with everything from layout, design, proofreading, and copyediting, to project management and requesting quotes from printers. The more you understand about the process, the greater an asset you are to your team and project. ”



ETHAN PALM

MA in Professional Writing (Dec. '20)

Technical Writing Intern, Summer 2020

Hometown: Morgan Hil, CA

Internship Type:

- paid
- unpaid

Applied by:

October

Accepted by:

November

Internship Category:

- corporate communication
- editing & publishing
- grant writing / fundraising
- healthcare communication
- information architecture
- journalism and news media
- non-profit communication
- public relations & marketing
- science writing
- technical writing
- user experience strategy
- writing for multimedia

What skills did you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?

My softskills were most important to securing my internship. My internship manager shared that everyone who applied was a strong writer and the team believes they could help anyone become a better writer, but they liked my curiosity and humility. I had an eagerness to learn and a willingness to accept knowledge from others.

What skills did you strengthen or learn at your internship?

I strengthened my writing skills in general and reinforced concepts from MAPW courses. I also gained experience with version control, information architecture, and collaborating with a distributed team. My internship was a remote experience, so I learned a lot about coordinating across time zones and working asynchronously.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?

I applied online through GitHub's website then completed interviews and a writing project. The entire process took about six weeks.

What did you do as an intern at GitHub?

My main responsibility was overhauling the documentation for GitHub Desktop, a software application. I took the initial content improvement plan and did some research to define an audience and user stories for the content, then with that information, I wrote the documentation based on GitHub's content models.

What was challenging about your internship?

I completed my internship remotely due, so the biggest challenge was spending the summer working in my apartment. It was difficult at times to shift into "work mode" and I missed the social aspects of an office.

What did you enjoy about your internship?

Despite the challenges, I couldn't have been at a better company for a remote internship. GitHub is remote-first and my team members helped me adjust to the new way of working.

What advice do you have for students interested in this field?

« *Technical writers come from all backgrounds and have diverse skills. Don't think you have to know a specific programming language or to have been an engineer to break into the field. I think it's easy to create barriers for yourself and feel like you don't know enough about a topic, but not knowing a lot just means you'll ask good questions.* »



Sydney Pujadas

MA in Professional Writing (May '21)

Associate Information Developer, 2019-20

Hometown: Devon, PA

Internship Type:

- paid
- unpaid

Applied by:

September 2019

Accepted by:

September 2019

Internship Category:

- corporate communication
- editing & publishing
- grant writing / fundraising
- healthcare communication
- information architecture
- journalism and news media
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What skills did you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?

I had experience with Markdown and HTML/CSS from my Software Documentation and Web Design classes. I also have previous internship experience for technical writing.

What skills did you strengthen or learn at your internship?

I strengthened my skills in writing for developers as well as business users. I also strengthened my technical skills in Markdown and Git. I learned how to manipulate UIs using inspect to create realistic screenshots of an application for its documentation.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?

I made sure to research the company prior to my application and interview to ensure my professional goals aligned with the role's responsibilities and requirements. I also updated my portfolio to highlight current and relevant work for the role I applied to.

What did you do as an intern at Appian?

I was in charge of developing an application during a three month training using Appian's proprietary software and expression language. I also updated, maintained, and created documentation for their main software platform, as well as their Financial Solutions applications and Workforce Safety application, which was released to help companies manage their workforce during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. I also did a number of UX writing consultations for the Financial Solutions squad.

What was challenging about your internship?

Learning the Appian expression language was definitely the most difficult part of my time at Appian. I was also challenged with learning a new software and its subsequent solutions and audiences in a short period of time.

What did you enjoy about your internship?

I enjoyed working with the other Information Developers as well as the UX Designers, Project Managers, and Software Engineers on my squad. Everyone was highly motivated and easy to work with.

What advice do you have for students interested in this field?



Ask questions. Be flexible. Be okay with getting things wrong.





NATHAN SNIZASKI

MA in Professional Writing (Aug '20)

Content Developer, Summer 2020

Hometown: Pittsburgh, Pa

Internship Type:

- paid
- unpaid

Applied by:

April 2020

Accepted by:

June 2020

Internship Category:

- corporate communication
- editing & publishing
- grant writing / fundraising
- healthcare communication
- information architecture
- journalism and news media
- non-profit communication
- public relations & marketing
- science writing
- technical writing
- user experience strategy
- writing for multimedia

What skills did you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?

During my interview, I was able to speak confidently about my qualifications for the intern position by referencing my MAPW training. Specifically, I highlighted concepts learned in Instructional Text Design, User Experience Methods, and Web Design.

What skills did you strengthen or learn at your internship?

I strengthened my interviewing and project management skills. I had to carefully plan virtual meeting requests and diligently follow up on unresolved issues. When interviewing subject matter experts (SMEs), I was mindful of using my time effectively by asking the right questions that would yield the richest sources of information.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?

I leveraged my professional network to connect with Computing Services team members. I submitted my resume and had an interview with an office manager to discuss my qualifications.

What did you do as an intern at CMU Computing Services?

My main responsibility was interviewing SMEs in order to develop user-facing content for a software application developed and managed by Computing Services. I prototyped instructional documentation intended for multiple academic audiences/constituencies, including students, faculty, staff, and administration.

What was challenging about your internship?

I had to adhere to style guidelines established by CMU's CMS in order to reflect the official university brand, tone, and visual identity. I faced some complications during prototyping due to design limitations set by the CMS.

What did you enjoy about your internship?

I enjoyed having access to the collective experience and insights of both the Computer Services team and SMEs. My internship supervisor gave me helpful feedback about information architecture and appropriately cataloging prototyped web pages and assets.

What advice do you have for students interested in this field?

“ In a content development role (e.g., technical writer, UX writer), remember that there is a difference between producing great ideas and producing actionable solutions. Creativity is great but being known for routinely solving problems makes you even more valuable. Always keep the user in mind and respect the valuable input from your SMEs. ”



LEAH STAUBER

MA in Professional Writing (Dec. '20)

Communications Intern, Summer 2020

Hometown: Pittsburgh, PA

Internship Type:

- paid
- unpaid

Applied by:

May 2020

Accepted by:

June 2020

Internship Category:

- corporate communication
- editing & publishing
- grant writing / fundraising
- healthcare communication
- information architecture
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What skills did you have that gave you an advantage in securing this internship?

Strong writing and copyediting skills were a must. Also important were editing and formatting skills in Microsoft Office Suite, Adobe Creative Cloud, and WordPress. Having a background in biology was a bonus.

What skills did you strengthen or learn at your internship?

I expanded upon my ability to format different webpages, learned and applied an organization's style guide to external documents, and improved my social media management skills.

What are the steps you took to land your internship?

I was very fortunate that GSA reached out to me and asked if I wanted to apply. Following a written application, I completed a video call interview and an editing test.

What did you do as an intern at the Genetics Society of America?

As a communications intern, I had the privilege of working in several different areas of the organization. I created and updated webpages, edited and formatted weekly newsletters and blog posts, and scheduled social media posts across different platforms.

What was challenging about your internship?

The hardest part of the internship was that everyone had to work remotely, due to COVID. While I regularly met with my supervisor and intermittently with other staff members, working from home eliminated typical office communications and camaraderie.

What did you enjoy about your internship?

I enjoyed learning more about nonprofit work, specifically from a nonprofit that hosts events and conferences for the scientific community. It was also a treat to work on a team with two alumnae from the MAPW program!

What advice do you have for students interested in this field?

☞ *Make the most of the skills you will learn in your classes. Even if something doesn't seem relevant to your career interests at the time, it might come in handy when you least expect it!*

