Internships Offer a Path to Career Planning

Summer internships can set a student on a new career path, or confirm the direction they’re already going. Edrea Mendoza, senior history major, rediscovered her love of research while working as an intern at the Denver Public Library this past summer.

As a special collections intern, Mendoza updated collections of pamphlets, books and legal agreements, as well as pictures that were donated to the library from various people. She noted the condition of each picture and documented everything for organizational purposes. “I learned a lot about the different ways people took photographs in the past, and some of the collection had to go into freezer storage because they were extremely flammable!” she said.

Mendoza even wrote a blog post on the Ludlow Massacre and the racial diversity of the mining camp which was published on the library’s Western History blog. https://history.denverlibrary.org/news/diversity-then-now-ludlow-massacre-and-western-history

After dabbling in different research areas, Mendoza discovered that what she enjoyed the most was answering reference questions.

“The department receives many reference questions from people who are usually out of state and cannot come in themselves to look for information in the archives. While a good majority of them were looking for genealogy information or copies of a relative's obituary, I also received a few interesting ones that were a little out of the box,” Mendoza said. “The most memorable was when I was asked to research the first African American mortician in Denver.”

Mendoza’s research involved using microfilm, scouring months’ worth of newspapers and being creative with her research methods.

“It was nice having the room to work independently, and even nicer that they trusted me more and more with larger things without being overseen constantly. They saw the work I did and gave me more freedom,” she said.

Mendoza received an internship grant from the University of Denver Robert Clemens Endowment which covered the cost of tuition credits and transportation to the library.

“AHSS students are lucky to have access to these internships, making it possible for them to explore different work and learning opportunities associated with their majors,” said Ingrid Tague, AHSS associate dean. “The internships can be a great pathway to thinking about career plans, as well as giving students valuable experience that will help them when applying for future jobs. We encourage as many of our student as possible to take advantage of these opportunities to explore the intersections between their studies and their future careers.”
In addition to the Denver Public Library, Mendoza has interned with Reading Partners and the Golden History Center. These internships have given her a clearer picture of the career she’d like to pursue.

“My time at the Golden History Center helped me fall in love with museum work so I hope to take my love of research to the museum world and become a curator somewhere. If not, I would also love to teach, either high school or at a collegiate level,” she said.