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ANT Internship
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Internship Journal

1/17/12:

I participated in a photo shoot for the Wake Forest website about a collection of Chinese ceramics, which were donated by a Wake alum. It was very interesting as this was my first experience as an intern at the museum. Obviously, there are many different aspects to museums and publicity is one of them. For people to know about the exhibits and the artifacts there must be advertisements and publicity. It was well planned to have current Wake students to be admiring the contributions of a former Wake student. It was bizarre how staged every step was and conscious poses were chosen. Of course when I eventually saw the article, there was only one picture selected, for an hour of photographing.

1/18/12:

I just had a quick meeting today to talk about what an internship would entail and what my responsibilities would be. I am so excited that for an entire semester I will get to be researching and helping to design an exhibit. This is such an amazing opportunity and will be extremely helpful in planning future possibilities. As of right now I got the idea that I would like to pursue a museum career because when looking at the list of common possibilities of Anthropology Majors I liked museums the best. Also, growing up, I have always loved visiting museums and wanted to explore every inch of them. Now, I finally get to be on the other side to help create the magic that visitors get to experience.

I particularly enjoyed reading the introduction to the exhibit written by Salgo. It is absolutely crucial to know about the donor and respect his motivations when designing an exhibit. After all, it is only through their generosity and contribution that these wonderful artifacts can be shared to the general public.

1/19/12:

Today I learned that working in a museum is not just esoteric and intellectual but sometimes grunt work is involved, and honestly this can be extremely satisfying. I am a neat freak and love organizing! The opportunity to take a messy storage shed and create a system of order is amazing. In any field systems are extremely important and integral to success. By restocking the shed with a semblance of design and planning will make transitions easier in the future. Unfortunately, it is impossible to know which cases and such will be needed until the collection and room is chosen. This is one of the major advantages of working in a smaller museum. While my internship has a specific focus, my day-to-day duties vary based on need. Being exposed to so many aspects of working in a museum allows me to form preferences and understand my strengths and weaknesses in each.

1/23/12:

The physical installation tasks continued today. I had my first experience with power tools! The room where the Japanese photos are going had an exhibit where push buttons were involved. Now the exhibit going in the room is just hanging photos, and these buttons are not

needed. I gained experience removing the buttons from the wall and replacing with a cover. Leaving possibilities open for the future, we removed the push buttons so that they could be reinstalled if they are ever again needed. I also helped hang a few text panels for the introduction of the exhibit. It was fascinating being exposed to the text panels, as they are bilingual. Language is an important consideration when designing an exhibit and sometimes having the message in multiple languages is both beneficial and relevant to the display. I learned a valuable lesson in measuring and re-measuring before drilling. I also saw the different methods possible for hanging panels and which was the most effective and secure, the mirror hangers.

1/24/12:

More text panels were hung today. Though, unfortunately I was not able to help finish all that were there because two architects came in the museum. Apparently in the master plan for Wake Forest is the transfer and new construction of the MOA. This would be a wonderful and necessary addition. Whittington was extremely knowledgeable about the planning and design of a museum. Always a visitor and never the intern I did not realize all the specifications a museum needs that a normal structure would not. For the main thing, storage is a huge issue. Right now the museum uses off-site storage, which is both inconvenient and not ideal. Instead, the museum needs storage easily accessible to the museum that is also perfectly climate-controlled and secure. Also, museums need appropriate lighting, to not harm artifacts, and de-humidifiers to protect the artifacts. So many decisions go into the planning of a museum, which made me realize how many shortcuts, the current Museum has to undergo to protect the objects.

1/31/12:

I love photographing artifacts!! Object photography is so much fun. It is like Christmas over and over getting to open a box and unwrap each layer of tissue paper to see what the next saddle rug or bag will look like. I was extremely grateful that my first experience with object photography involved something somewhat invulnerable like rugs. Unlike with the ceramics, I was not terrified of accidentally dropping the rug and it shattering. I definitely am very interested in this aspect of museum work. I like handling and working directly with the artifacts. I am definitely a tangible person and like my projects to be very visible and measurable. Also on this note I do like touching things. I am that person who hates seeing “no touching” signs at museums. Of course, now I do realize how fragile some artifacts can be and that the oils on people’s hands overtime could be very harmful.

2/1/12, 2/6/12

More photographing! Now I have encountered some rugs that I cannot photograph because they are so large. Later they shall have to be taken off-site and set up with a larger white background. I hope that I will be free to participate in that. Maybe I will get to climb a higher ladder. I am that weird person that actively likes heights. It also is helpful for getting a clearer and more accurate shot of the object. By having the aerial view, it more accurately resembles what the piece looks like and shows the piece with accurate proportions.

2/10/12:

To end off my object photography career, I photographed the saddles and their accoutrements. These were the most difficult as they were awkwardly shaped and had so many

items, all considered under the same ID number. The easiest way to capture all these items was to photograph each item individually, and to mark very clearly on the list that multiple photos were used to capture all the items under one ID number. Unfortunately, my schedule did not match up with Kyle's to go off-site for the camel covers and such, which was disappointing. That would have been an incredible experience. Finishing up with the pictures made me realize that I wish I could have helped with the cataloging as well. I think that would have been an interesting aspect of museum work to be exposed to. Maybe later in the semester new artifacts will arrive and I will get the chance!

2/14/12:

The topic of a Big Idea was continued and I submitted my suggestions for this exhibit's Big Idea. I think I am beginning to understand the concept more than I did originally. It is not just a cursory overstatement but really provides a message. It requires a difficult balance of including all the aspects while being specific at the same time. As we later work with the artifacts and decide which ones will be shown and in what manner I think the Big Idea will transform and take shape even more. It is important to have possibilities for the Big Idea but also to let it develop as the exhibit is designed. The next project is to have a comprehensive list of all the artifacts (Salgo ID, MOA ID, country of origin, date, descriptions, etc). Having all this information in one excel spreadsheet will enable us to more accurately plan and design the exhibit later.

2/21/12:

Having seen all the artifacts and personally taken their pictures, it made for the initial selection of which pieces would be shown at the museum and which would go in the traveling exhibit much easier. The rugs were organized by country of origin, as these will show similarities of choice and design rather than coincidence. It is important that the two exhibits (stationary and traveling) resemble each other so that similar text panels can be used for each, rather than having to design two completely different exhibits. Cutting the rugs we work with by half will first of all give Kyle more space as she can move the traveling rugs off-site, and will also provide a more manageable amount to work and plan with. The number one factor in deciding how many rugs to display is the amount of cabinet space. Removing the cabinets on the floor will significantly reduce space. Potentially some rugs may be hung, which will allow for more to be shown. It is important to begin planning the organization of the exhibit and what types of visual aids and other elements that will be present. These will also take up space and determine how many rugs themselves can be displayed. These decisions will begin taking up the next part of my internship.

2/28/12:

I received some experience in writing an introduction to a section of the exhibit. This spring will be an exhibit that shows a mixture of collections that the museum currently has possession of. Because of my extensive background research into the Salgo collections, I was assigned to write the introduction to the Salgo section. In this type of panel it is important to focus on the donor and help create a connection and spark of interest with the visitor. The hardest part of creating the introduction was not the initial draft but the constant revisions. As a college student I have learned to write at a certain level, unfortunately this is all wrong for museum panels. I was able to write the content that I desired the panel to show but not at the

right reading level. It took far more work to change the introduction from a grade 12.4 reading level to an 8 than it did the initial creation.

For today's session we took a fieldtrip to visit an Oriental Rug Store in Winston-Salem. It was a wonderful experience and was reminiscent of doing fieldwork during my summer abroad in Nepal. When speaking to an informant, it is important to ask questions but it is even more important to let them tell you what they think is important. Usually, they know better than we do what is significant and deserves explanation. After all, we are the outsiders trying to learn, so it is much more logical that the inhabitants of the culture would be more knowledgeable. The storeowner had two children who went to Wake so was immediately respectful of our background and respected our motivations and interest. I was astounded by his knowledge of all the rugs in the store. Just by looking at a rug he would immediately know the country of origin and most likely how old it was. This is the type of man who would be a wonderful resource in identifying some of our pieces with conflicting theories of origin. As a second semester junior I am starting to consider potentially pursuing an Honors in Anthropology and more so what topics could be good. Listening to him tell us all about the rugs and about the injustice of the poverty of these weavers who create beautiful work compared to the fame of painters. Such a discrepancy would be fascinating to look into through potentially conducting ethnography of the rug market. I greatly look forward with interacting with him again in furthering the exhibit.

3/2/12:

Today was a very hands-on session, which was very helpful. We measured all the wall cabinets that will be used for the exhibit. It is a very precarious operation to climb into and measure cases that are currently filled with artifacts. It is very important to have the measurements of the needed space. This enables the drawing of an accurate floor plan, which in turn allows for creating a layout of artifacts. At a later date, we will create a front-on depiction of the cases to enable gluing pictures of rugs into their desired locations. Such representations allow for accurate planning without moving the actual rugs in the cases multiple times. Looking at the space suggested the need for one movable case, though originally we had planned on having no movable cases. This will most likely be placed at the front of the exhibit to allow for more storage space, while the back will provide a clean surface for a title and potentially an introduction.

Already changing a basic design feature of the exhibit shows just how flexible plans are. We were so certain that no movable cases would be used to increase the floor space, and already from the first serious look at the space, it seems that at least one movable case is needed. This makes me realize just how many drafts labels and all text will have to undergo be considered ready. Edits and drafting will clearly take more time and thought than any original draft.

3/8/12:

Class was very intense, but in a good way. We are on the brink of writing all the text for the exhibit, a necessary step if we are to meet the goal of finishing the text by this summer. It is the ideal plan to have all the designing and text finished for the exhibit so that in the fall semester all that is left is installation. During class we completed a focused list of anthropological topics for the exhibit. This list combined with the big idea will provide the direction and underlying concept for the exhibit. Thus, enabling the effective writing of text panels. We are hovering around a Big Idea but need to finalize it, as well as the title. This task is both essential and

necessary. In very few and simple words I must encompass the entire message of the exhibit! It must be broad enough that all text panels can relate to it but at the same time specific enough so that visitors can understand the message.

3/9/12:

Today was a very long and very interesting session. Our friend and great resource from the rug store visited to help clarify the origins of a few contradictory pieces. For some rugs, sources had provided two to three different possible origins. Our informant easily identified the rugs and often scoffed at the incorrect attempts at identifying rug origins. He also made numerous comments that all of our efforts to protect the rugs were unnecessary. After all, they are already very old and designed to be walked on. The tissue paper between rugs is just unnecessary, cumbersome, and provides more work for us. Our differing views on the saddle rugs are very interesting. To him, they are merchandise, a potential for profit and functional pieces. To us, they are history, invaluable, and able to share insight on a rich history and culture so that we may understand it a little more.

Once we had finished showing him the rugs we had questions on, he began to go through every single rug! We were hard pressed to keep all the rugs in a semblance of order and sanity at the rate he would look at a rug and move on. He clearly had less interest in rugs from China and Tibet or as he usually classified them as from Nepal. I do not know if this is from a lack of expertise or a cultural judgment that more information is unnecessary. He highlighted the significance and hindrance that came from many of the rugs having covers on the back. Only by looking at the back is the style of weaving truly identifiable and thus determine the source of it's weaving. Before he mentioned it, I had even praised this addition as I assumed it made the rugs more durable.

3/20/12:

Now is time for my first attempt at writing labels. I have read so many articles on things to focus on and attributes to avoid that it is all blurring together so that the only thing I can do is try. Even growing up I always learned how to play a board game not by reading the instructions but by actually doing. So, as with that, I think the best way for me to understand writing labels is by actually doing it. I have always struggled with writing and my drafts always need lots of edits. I feel bad for Professor Whittington because he is probably going to have a lot of criticisms. My content is always usually pretty good, but my form leaves something to be desired for. Hopefully my innate confusion by grammar will not be too much of a hindrance.

Trying to write these labels has not been too bad as I only have to focus on the Spring Exhibit, which is mainly 6 pieces from my area of expertise. Even better they are all from China or Tibet so they should focus on similar issues and designs. The main thing I have been focusing on is to identify the one unique feature of the piece whether it is the shape or design or coloration. Then I can easily and succinctly in around 40 words identify and explain the significance of this attribute to the public.

My other main assignment was to draw the cases to scale on graph paper. I have already done this but I drew both cases on one sheet and did not add the back wall. Thus, they are not very useful for planning an exhibit. Now I will redraw so each case is on its own sheet and the back wall is drawn in, so that then we can use them to plan how to fit the actual pieces and their section panels.

We still need to nail down the big idea and title. We understand the general gist but need to get the exact wording. It is amazing how much work goes into such a simple sounding idea. Though we understand what the title and big idea will convey, we still do not know exactly how to say them.

3/23/12

Now is the exciting time to make and send out the Front End Evaluation. I am so thankful now that I am on so many listservs because hopefully this will help get good and many responses back. It will be interesting to explain this project succinctly to my peers as I have been thinking and talking about this for almost half of a semester now. What seems obvious and easy for me will be completely random and unheard of for some of my friends. Hopefully, through the survey results, I will understand exactly where they are and what they are thinking and be able to best explain the topic to them through the exhibit and labels.

3/27/12:

I have attempted and struggled through my first try at writing labels. Now I need to look through the edits and think of better and stronger ways of portraying my points. I did a pretty good job identifying features, as I thought I would, but now I need to learn how to convey my ideas better. It is hard writing a label in only 40 words and at an 8th grade reading level. College in all my other writing experiences is all about reaching that magic page number of 7-15 pages. Thus, when I am suddenly told to limit my word count it is difficult. I am so use to the fluff and extraneous words to fill the page I have forgotten how to be concise. I am glad that I am having to retrieve this skill but that does not mean it is easy.

In addition to the labels themselves I now must try to write the introductory panels to each section. I really like the theme of organizing the exhibit based on the functions of saddle rugs. I think this will be a logical way of combining cultures, geography, and type of piece such as rug versus saddle. It will also make sense for the audience as they will clearly see how these pieces functioned on a daily basis in these societies. After complaining about only having 40 words I now have a grand 125 words or so to work with. Hopefully, I will have more success!

4/17/12:

It has been a while sense we have met as I had to work on my Baltimore presentation and then Whittington was also out of town. I am looking forward to getting back down to business and finishing up this internship. I am excited to see what the finished product will look like, theoretically that is.

My assignment still remains the same. As the text is one of the most important part of an exhibit and needing to be done before I leave this still remains more focus. There are some basic incorrect assumptions that I have been working under that I need to fix. For one, within a label there should be no repetition of terms. I unfortunately thought that such repetition would be a positive as it would allow the audience to need a smaller vocabulary and more clearly grasp the concept. Of course instead it only seems lazy and repetitive and boring. Woops. Thankfully, this is an easy fix and an easy mistake to avoid in the future. I also made too big of generalizations, which though I understand in the proper light would not be obvious to those who have not read as much as me. For example, though I of course know that not everyone was Muslim, my phraseology did not convey that fact.

Soon it will be time to decide what actual artifacts will be going into the exhibit, and pragmatics of how big will the text panels be and what will they look like. So many tasks and designing decisions still left to make!

4/23/12:

I am about to be in the homestretch of this internship and the semester as a whole! I have continued to edit my section panels and have even begun looking at pictures that could go in the panel or the exhibit as a whole. It is important for these images to have good qualities: to be good pictures that relate to the topic and almost more importantly not to have heavily restricted copyright. If a picture is copyrighted, it is that more difficult to get permission and actually use the image.

As we have gone through the process we realize that more sections are needed for the exhibit, mainly a Today section. We have looked at the time of most of these pieces namely the 18th-20th centuries, but we need to relate how this plays out in society today.

Also, it is time to pick the actual artifacts!

5/3/12:

I have picked the actual artifacts. Surprisingly, this was not as difficult as I had anticipated. We had discussed it, which helped give me ideas and know what features to look for in the artifacts. Having the sections in my mind helped in making decisions as I was able to find the best examples of each function.

I do not work very well with scales and measurements. I completely missed the fact that the spreadsheet had all the measurements in centimeters and worked with my scale ignoring that fact. Even though I knew somewhere more rugs should be able to fit in the space, I could not for my life get the math to work to place them in there. I knew we would not be able to fit in as many rugs as we would like, but I couldn't even fit in a basic respectable amount.

Now that I have understood my error I will quickly rework the numbers and place in the pieces and also make the formatted section panels.

5/4/12:

I had a lot of fun making the section panels. I like the idea of a two-part title: the function and then a question expanding on that fact. I think that is an attractive and effective way of communicating the basic message. I also like the basic format I created of the title, two pictures and then the text itself. I think that it looks very good and will catch the reader's attention.

I still struggled to fit enough pieces in the exhibit. I am glad that we worked through it together because you're expertise was very helpful. The size of the text panel was the main issue but I have no experience or conceptual understanding of what sizes or proportions work well. Making the panels square and not rectangular make fitting them together as well as in conjunction with the rugs much easier. Now we have a representative amount of cultures and pieces in the exhibit.

Now is time to try my hand at writing these text labels. I never figured out the best way of transmitting my ideas for the spring exhibit. I did get to read your interpretation through your labels. I could clearly see my points and ideas, but transmitted through more effective word use.

5/5/12:

Today I spent a lovely time in the museum re-reading the current labels for pieces that will also be in the fall exhibit and using the books to get accurate information. Some labels were obvious and fairly easy to write. Other pieces, I knew what topics I wanted to discuss but didn't actively know the information. This made it harder to look through book indexes or search the internet to find the answers to the questions I had and wanted to discuss.

I can't believe that I only have one more meeting and then my internship and the semester will be over. I hope that these labels are helpful and will serve their purpose well as I do want to finish my internship having been an active participant and contributor. Writing labels has not been easy but it has been satisfying and rewarding.

5/6/12:

I have thoroughly enjoyed having this internship this semester. I have never had an internship before and this was a wonderful opportunity to "break into" the working world. It gave me a new appreciation for the differences between a job and school, though I recognize that this experience was an interesting hybrid between the two.

Of course going through this internship, I realized ways I wish it could have gone differently and hopefully will be able to change these aspects for "next time". The main thing I would like to change, which cannot be done during a normal semester, would be to have the internship be my only priority during its duration. It was difficult at some points to balance and prioritize between normal homework and internship duties. Some times I would choose to focus on my normal schoolwork while others I would do the internship first and the rest of my work later. It was particularly difficult as neither one is obviously more important and pressing. Honestly, they are both very important and influential. Thus, I would really enjoy setting aside a time when I only held the internship so that I could put my full weight and energy into it and have much larger results.

Along these same lines, I would have very much enjoyed setting aside a set time and schedule each week to come into the museum, in addition to the weekly meeting/lesson. It would have made planning for and making time in my schedule for museum duties if there was a set time every week. Also in this vein I would have enjoyed participating in the daily duties of museum life. I would have found that fascinating and very interesting to participate in.

These are very minor critiques compared to my overall experience of the internship. I loved this experience and feel that I gained a lot out of it. Normally classes come very easy to me so it was both frustrating and rewarding to not understand concepts or assignments right away but keep working at it until I succeeded. Writing text panel was easily the hardest thing I had to do this semester but equally the most worthwhile. Writing introductions or labels I feel that I truly accomplished something and contributed to the exhibit. I cannot wait to see its installation in the fall and would love to volunteer and assist in its set up. I look forward to being able to show my parents what my hard work for a semester was able to help create.

Thank you so much and I hope you have a great summer!!