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Internships at The Walrus and Hive Media Group

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SASAH Experiential Learning

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Final Report

My experiential-learning experiences at the Walrus and Hive Media Group were incredible opportunities for my growth and professionalization. At The Walrus Magazine, I was a Digital Intern and immersed myself in learning about content strategy, website design, and podcasting and got to intersect my creative interests with technical skills. My main responsibilities as a Digital Intern were converting print articles to digital posts, contributing to social-media campaigns, and creating visualizations to complement storytelling, such as animated videos and podcast trailers. Through this learning experience, I have developed new skills, built relationships, and narrowed down the future career path I would like to pursue.

At Hive Media, I was a Mergers and Acquisitions (M&A) Intern, and the hands-on learning experiences and insights I gathered at Hive will be critical for my future endeavours. As an M&A intern, I spearheaded the initial discovery and value-based discussions for potential website acquisitions, implemented strategies to increase traffic and revenue projections, and drove content outreach and growth for new acquisitions. From sales to operations, content to social media, I was able to work and move around tangentially within different departments and sides of the business. As a result, I got to work within a large ecosystem and learn about different departments and roles from all over the company and got a well-formed and holistic sense of how the company operates internally and externally. M&A allowed me to immerse myself in Hive's business operations and the rapidly changing publishing industry as a whole.

Both experiences put me outside of my comfort zone, which is where my growth happened. Before either of the internships began, I had already hurled myself outside of my comfort zone. Before I was offered an internship at The Walrus, I reached out to Shelley Ambrose from the SASAH Advisory Council and expressed my interest in publishing, writing, and editing. This made me feel very vulnerable and took a great deal of self-convincing. I had never done anything like that before, but I had learned about the importance of networking from the SASAH Introduction to Professional and Community Practices course and was inspired to do further research and watch YouTube videos about how to introduce yourself and network on LinkedIn. Shelley was kind and responded to me. In her message, she explained that she had retired from The Walrus but, based on my interest and skill set, she thought I should apply to The Walrus and asked me to send over my resume and she would make some introductions for me. I was ecstatic!

Over email, Shelley introduced me to Angela Misri, the Digital Director of The Walrus. I put myself out of my comfort zone even further when Angela responded. Angela has looked over my resume and, based on my experience planning programming as a Residence Advisor, Residence Don, and on the Arts and Humanities Students' Council, she believed I seemed to be more interested in working in an events capacity and would happily pass along my resume to the department that runs the events for The Walrus. Even though I was familiar and comfortable with event planning, from planning my high school's prom, to food drives, to residence events, I did not find this work fulfilling or enjoyable. Instead, I was interested in the unexplored territory of pure digital journalism and the backend creation and maintenance of the magazine's website, podcast, and social-media platforms: I wanted to be a Digital Intern, not an Events Intern.

I received Angela's email late in the evening and laid awake for most of the night trying to think of a response that would be polite, express my disinterest in events, and show that I was keen to work directly with Angela as a Digital Intern. In the morning, I wrote back to say that, while it was true that I had experience in event management, I believed digital journalism, operations, marketing, and communications were untapped potentials of mine and I would love to gain experience in those capacities. I further tried to market myself and my skill set by noting that, with my keen interest in publishing, experience with marketing from my student leadership roles, and strong communication skills from my background in SASAH and English Language and Literature, I believed I would be well suited for the role of Digital Intern. Shortly afterward, Angela asked to be put in contact with Dr. Bruce to go over the internship requirements for my program and then offered me the internship. This was such a rollercoaster of emotion and adrenaline. Looking back, I am so proud of myself for taking that leap and putting myself out there. If I had not, I do not think I would have secured this internship.

A similar situation occurred during my application to Hive Media Group. Initially, I applied to Hive Media as a social-media intern. They offered two internship positions: one as a content writer and the other as a social-media intern. Neither interested me immensely because I found the social-media marketing experience at the Walrus to be a bit dull and the fast pace of journalism and content writing stressful. Despite these hesitations, I took a shot in the dark, supposing that, if I was even fortunate enough to be a social-media intern, it would still be an educational experience. During my first interview, the administrative assistant, Vanessa, brought up a few times that she thought I would be a good fit as an M&A intern. At the end of the interview, she said I would be moving on to the next stage of the hiring process. Immediately following the interview, I looked up M&A. I had no idea what this stood for and tried to learn as

much as possible about it before my next interview. From my research, it sounded right up my alley because I loved the operations side of The Walrus and was interested in sales, especially because of my positive experience as a restaurant server. After a successful second interview, I was offered an M&A internship at Hive. M&A was mostly uncharted territory and very outside of my comfort zone, but it sounded so much more exciting to me than social media or content writing, and I happily accepted. I am so glad I took the leap to apply to Hive even though the roles I initially was applying for were not ideal because it led me to my M&A internship that helped me grow so much.

Both internships took place online. Initially, with my Walrus internship, I was quite nervous about completing a remote internship. The first part of my internship took place at home because of the extended winter breaks and residence closures. Working from home was a challenging situation because of constant distractions from pets and family members who were also working or doing school from home. For example, during our first meeting, one of my cats, Freddy, was loudly meowing to be let into my room. Thank goodness I was on mute! I quickly problem-solved and got into a routine of letting Freddy and my dogs into my room before my morning meetings. That way they could relax and nap on my bed instead of distracting me with their dramatic efforts to be let into my room. Partway through my internship, I returned to London and my Don room in the Ontario Hall residence where I had much more privacy and fewer distractions than at home. In many ways, I missed being home, but it was a nice change. Instead of rushing to let the dogs outside in-between internship meetings or doing household chores, I was able to focus on taking care of myself (e.g., making snacks, checking my UWO email, etc.). In hindsight, I am grateful to have experienced interning remotely in two different locations. It gave me perspective and taught me the value of creating routines for working at

home and taking time for myself. It also prepared me for my remote summer internship with Hive Media and helped me try to overcome the challenges and distractions of working from home.

Navigating internships through the online landscape was also a unique challenge because it tested one of my greatest weaknesses: asking for help. I was diagnosed with a learning disability, dyslexia, in Grade One. I can recall being frequently punished by my teachers for asking questions when I did not understand a concept. I was also intimidated to ask questions because of my peers. My mom tells me that I used to come home crying because the boys in my Grade One class would call me “stupid” and bully me for not being able to read. Fortunately, I was able to get tutoring at a dyslexia learning centre and was able to improve my literacy rate—to the extent that I was ahead of my classmates within a year!

The fear of asking questions, however, lingered for years to come. During my internship with The Walrus, I had to push myself and actively work on asking questions and asking for help. At first, if I felt unsure about a project, I would message Harsh, a fellow SASAH student, and ask him. Fortunately, over the course of the internship, I felt more comfortable with my supervisor and fellow interns and gained the confidence to clarify things. For example, my supervisor, Angela, would sometimes say the wrong meeting times, instead of the times sent out over emails. I was able to ask if those were the correct times and prevent any confusion. This was a learning experience I will carry forward when I graduate from university and enter the working world.

The need to ask for clarification ties to another valuable lesson I learned, which was the importance of relationship building. Angela, at times, was unorganized, so I had to learn how to adapt to work with her. Moving forward, I know that I will likely work with people who are

unorganized or challenging to work with in other ways, but that is a part of the working world, and I must prepare myself for this likelihood. Besides my fellow interns, I primarily interacted with Angela and the intern coordinator, Cassandra. Both of them helped me transition into my role smoothly and were always available if I had any questions or concerns. The two provided effective mentorship, gently guiding me and serving as my pillars without which I could not stand.

I really enjoyed how the Walrus internship was structured. Each week had a specific focus, such as learning the website and the different systems the company uses, delving into social media, learning how to write content that takes on the voice of The Walrus in newsletters, podcasts, and more. It has been very refreshing to hone in on one of the elements of the online publishing world. Initially, however, it was a daunting task. Specifically, in the first week, we jumped right into things with building posts for thewalrus.com on the content management system (CMS) WordPress. This involved transferring print pieces to the web with HTML. My only experience with coding is from the second-year SASAH course Digital Literacies (ARTHUM 2230G) in which we were introduced to website design and creation through HTML and CSS. I had to scramble to review the resources from that course and re-learn HTML. I spent *six hours* working on the first assignment. It was a lot of work but very rewarding; I am very happy with the end results of the web post I made. In fact, it has been the first post from all the interns to move from the draft stage (via a hidden and password-protected site) to production (live site)—which makes me feel very accomplished!

At The Walrus, I was surprised to discover new skills and strengths of mine. As an English major, I am familiar with telling stories through essays, but during my internship, I discovered I have strength in content marketing and telling a story through design, imagery, and

layout. I loved creating visualizations to complement storytelling, such as animating videos to promote The Walrus' podcasts and newsletter. Podcasting editing is another strength of mine, as I learned during my internship. I had never edited audio but was quick to learn how to mix and blend tracks. Time went by so quickly while editing podcasts because it was so enjoyable! I am excited to edit more podcasts this upcoming year in my fourth-year individual SASAH project.

As a Digital Intern at The Walrus, I found value in getting hands-on experience doing career exploration. This learning experience helped me to narrow down possible career paths. I loved working in the publishing industry because it is ever-evolving and fast-paced, but I was not in love with the journalistic side of The Walrus. While I love writing, reading, and storytelling, I have never been drawn to journalism. Some of the other interns were journalism majors at Ryerson, and the internship emphasized pitching stories and building a journalism portfolio. This was my least favourite aspect of the internship. What I did love was the operations side. Learning about the marketing funnel, different traffic sources, and SEO fascinated me. I also enjoyed working for such a large company because there were so many different moving parts, departments, and opportunities. As such, I have been able to narrow down my career interests to the publishing industry and, specifically, to the operations side rather than journalism and content creation. This learning experience inspired me to apply for an internship at another publishing company, Hive Media, where I delved further into operations and discovered my interest in sales as an M&A intern.

My SASAH education was incredibly relevant to my Walrus internship experience. The coding skills and experience creating posts on WordPress I learned in the Digital Literacies with Prof. Ruth Skinner were directly applied in my internship. As a Digital Intern, I was responsible for helping convert print articles to an online format on WordPress using HTML code. The

Digital Literacies course quite literally trained me for this part of my internship! SASAH also prepared me to think critically, problem-solve, and get out of my comfort zone. The program encourages me to dip my toes into Arts and Humanities disciplines that I otherwise would never have taken. So, I felt prepared to jump into the unknown and hit the ground running! Through my education in SASAH, I also developed skills that I used daily during my internship, such as writing, editing, and working well independently and in groups. I am so grateful for my SASAH education as it prepared me for this internship, which I found tremendous value in.

My internship at The Walrus as a Digital Intern was a transformative experience. I learned so much about myself, the publishing industry, and my future career paths. This internship was an incredible learning experience, and if I could go back in time, I would do it again in a heartbeat.

My time at The Walrus prepared me for my new adventure: my summer Mergers and Acquisitions internship at Hive Media Group. In a short period of time, I learned so much about how a media company operates, how consumers are monetized, and how the publishing industry works, and I was so supported by my amazing supervisors, Ryan and Caroline. I worked on the two sides of M&A—operations and sales—and got to experience both sides of the business.

As an M&A intern, I spearheaded the initial discovery and value-based discussions for potential website acquisitions, implemented strategies to increase traffic and revenue projections, and drove content outreach and growth for new acquisitions. Part of the week, I spent researching, sourcing, and ranking potential websites acquisitions with specific criteria, verticals, and parameters in mind. This allowed me to develop my research and analytical skills because I constantly had to quantify data and become familiar with data-driven software, such as Google Analytics and Semrush, and different widgets to analyze data, such as a website's monthly visits,

traffic sources, and monthly sessions. For website sourcing, I worked closely with my supervisor Ryan. He was very supportive and gave me feedback to help me improve my skills. Once I received feedback, I adamantly followed it. At the end of my internship, Ryan said he was impressed at how quickly I learned the sourcing and always followed feedback. I enjoyed website sourcing because it gave me insight into the acquisition process and helped me develop technical skills. It was also rewarding and challenging to find potential acquisitions that met the required criteria and even more satisfying when Ryan was able to meet the website owners and begin the acquisition process.

During the course of my internship, I was also involved with three projects: affiliate linking, inputting Pinterest metrics for content analysis, and doing content outreach for a website called *Abandoned Spaces*. I did affiliate linking for the *Decoist* website, one of Hive's most popular brands. *Decoist* is an interior design and architecture web magazine based on WordPress. As previously mentioned, I feel very comfortable using the WordPress system, thanks to SASAH's Digital Literacies course, in which we created blogs and wrote blog posts, so it was lovely to work on WordPress again. Affiliate linking is one of Hive's revenue streams. It involves hyperlinks being manually inputted in articles so that users can click on the link and purchase products mentioned in the article. In return, the company gets a small commission for every user that clicks on the link and a larger commission if the user goes forwards and makes a purchase. I love interior design and learning about architectural styles so doing affiliate linking for the *Decoist* site was a pleasure. It was also very satisfying researching duplicates of products to link and finding the perfect one. My affiliate linking project taught me a lot about branding and the importance of presenting a unified voice between voice, logos, colours, and other brand-related materials. It also taught me something about myself. At first, I loved doing affiliate

linking because I am passionate about interior design and love learning about home-design trends and architectural styles. Affiliate linking, however, quickly became repetitive and tedious. It was a mindless task and not challenging. The novelty of it wore off, and by the end of my internship, it was my least favourite project. As such, I learned a lesson: I like to be challenged and to do active work.

My second project, inputting Pinterest metrics for content analysis, was similar to affiliate linking in that it was repetitive, but it was challenging and gave me a sense of fulfillment. With this project, I worked with Rebecca, a Social Media Coordinator, to record data from Pinterest for the Decoist brand as well as another brand, called “Man Made DIY.” While the idea of inputting data into a document sounds tedious and mind-numbing, it was surprisingly enjoyable. I always had to be on alert to catch mistakes. The only other person with access to this recorded data was Rebecca, and she helped proofread and problem-solve. I would problem-solve for things like incorrect links and broken formulas. This project taught me a lot of lessons about analyzing data and using Google sheets, such as how to create data filters and put mathematical formulas into your sheets. I know the transferable skills I developed with this project will serve me well in my future career.

My third project was content outreach, project management, and digital asset management for the *Abandoned Spaces* website. This website is under Timera, a new acquisition about urban exploration and photography of abandoned towns, battlefields, wrecks, factories, mansions, and hospitals. Since the website is made up entirely of articles based on outsourced content and the outreach coordinator left the company during the acquisition, the website has not been active and, as such, has not been making revenue. As the Abandoned Spaces Outreach Coordinator, I drove the initial discovery of urban explorers and photographers and reached out

to them with the goal of acquiring assets for the website. It was a fun and fulfilling challenge to research potential photography, email back and forth with photographers, and acquire assets. Through my outreach efforts, I was able to restart the website's operations, secure enough content for the website to operate until October, and help the website begin to make profits again. I also updated the outreach process and strategy and reorganized documents to be more efficient and user-friendly. This included creating a tracking sheet to keep tabs on the status of my content outreach and labelling and dating folders for newly acquired assets. Caroline, my supervisor, said that she spoke to the Timera editor and he was so pleased with the work that he called me "a treasure." I loved doing content outreach because I got to connect with people from all across the world and email back and forth with them, was able to make an impact, and had complete control over this project. This experience also let me dip my toes into project management and learn how to balance all the moving parts. I hope project management and outreach will be part of my career path. Both translate well into sales because it involves moving pieces and being goal-oriented and is about the intangibles that you have (e.g., grit, emotional intelligence, patience).

During my M&A internship, I valued my learning. I was taught so much about the publishing industry, company operations, the acquisitions process, branding, revenue streams, and methods for evaluating a business. I loved my time at Hive Media. The internship informed my hopes for a future career path. I am very set on the digital publishing industry and now aspire to be in a sales and/or operations role. Learning the acquisition process fascinated me and caused me to consider working in sales because it is customer-facing and involves the intangibles (e.g., emotional intelligence and grit) and your ability to learn quickly and be goal-oriented. I would love to work at a company like Hive where you can move in tangential job functions in a large

ecosystem. The people at Hive were also a pleasure to work with and so supportive. Rebecca and my supervisors, Ryan and Caroline, provided effective mentorship and gently guided me through my internship. Caroline and I had weekly one on ones when we broke down my goals and problem-solved, while Ryan met with me once or twice a week and gave me feedback, and Rebecca was always available for assistance and support. Overall, I enjoyed my internship at Hive Media Group as a Mergers and Acquisitions intern and hope to work in a similar industry and role after graduation.

I found tremendous value in my internship experiences and know fellow SASAH students have done and will do the same. The value of an internship is that it offers you hands-on work experience that you otherwise may not receive in your academic education and gives you a taste of industries and roles, which in turn can inform your career path and future endeavors. For example, I loved interning at The Walrus because it exposed me to the publishing industry, but I enjoyed the operations and technical side of that internship far more than the journalism side. If I had never interned at The Walrus, I would never have known that I was interested in operations, let alone Mergers and Acquisitions, which is where my first internship led me. At my second internship at Hive, I got to fully immerse myself in the operations of a business and go a step forward by working in sales and content strategy. Without my internships, I may never have realized how much I enjoy the sales and operations of the publishing industry.

As it stands now, I am planning on entering the workforce after graduation and would be open to working at Hive once I have graduated. I am planning on reaching out to Justin at Hive during the winter break, which will, I hope, lead to a job. In terms of my career trajectory, I would love to work in operations or sales. I love communications as well, which underpins both

of these sides of businesses. For specific industries, I would love to work in media, technology, or publishing.

I am looking forward to what the future holds and feel confident in the knowledge and experiences I carry from my internships. This is especially true after the inspiring presentations I watched my classmates give about their experiential-learning opportunities. As Andrew reassured me with his presentation, with the soft skills I have cultivated in my Arts and Humanities education, I should not feel worried that I have far more soft skills than technical ones because employers are very willing to train new employees and interns on the hard skills. Denise's presentation further reassured me when she said that she now realizes that "storytelling is employable." Indeed, I have learned that being a strong writer and having the creative capacity to tell stories through writing, visuals, branding, and more is something employers are looking for. I feel so honoured to know and be friends with such hard-working and inspiring individuals, and it was a pure pleasure to learn about their accomplishments and what they have learned through these experiences. I am looking forward to seeing the amazing things they will do and hope my cohort and I will nurture a lifelong love affair with knowledge, learning, and the Arts and Humanities.