

### Summer Internship Report: Gemini Ink

I spent eight weeks this summer interning at Gemini Ink, a literary nonprofit based in Downtown San Antonio, Texas. Gemini Ink's stated mission is to "to help people create and share the human story," which they do through a series of fairly-priced creative writing and literature classes, free community workshops, public events and programming, and collaborations with other literary and cultural organizations in the San Antonio area. I was hired as a Programs Intern, responsible for overseeing the kid's writing camps that go on in the summer as well as many of the adult classes, both of which are taught by published authors. These responsibilities were less time-consuming than originally expected, so I had the opportunity to serve as a general intern for the organization, helping each staff member and learning about the different parts of the nonprofit, including PR, finance, publishing, and community outreach.

One unexpected aspect of my internship was that none of the staff at Gemini Ink are employed full-time, and have work weeks ranging from 24-35 hours. Under the Lilly Discernment Institute, I was required to work 40-hour weeks, making me the only full time employee. This was an interesting transition for the organization, as they are accustomed to unpaid interns who work 5-10 hours per week. As a result, I quickly became oriented to the office and got to know the Gemini Ink staff pretty well. They soon became accustomed to my presence, even when most of the staff was not working, and depended on me as a sort of catch-all employee and helper.

In this way, I found myself with a varied and morphing set of tasks, which required me to adapt. For instance, when the receptionist had health problems, I manned the front desk for a week, quickly learning the unexpectedly complicated processes of confirming student registrations, processing credit card payments and tuitions, keeping the office neat, fixing the printer, and making sure all employees were in communication with each other about matters of the schedule, budget, or other concerns. Other, less busy weeks, I found myself with pockets of free time and tried to take initiative. When coworkers were brainstorming ways to brighten up the new office space and mentioned the possibility of hiring a painter, I volunteered to paint the office myself. I obtained the supplies and paint and spent one work day painting the wall, hoping to save the organization money. Other responsibilities included promotional tasks like putting up flyers and contacting local venues, using social media to promote events, researching and drafting biographies of the authors who were teaching, creating a digital database for contact information, setting up for and selling books at evening readings, and acting as a liaison between parents, children, and teachers during camps.

Responsibilities that I particularly enjoyed fell under the section of the organization called “Writers In Communities,” about which Gemini Ink’s website says:

WIC sends professional writers into diverse community settings — such as shelters, schools, neighborhood centers, and detention facilities — to work alongside students of all ages, needs, interests and abilities. **WIC** writing workshops, — **always free to participants** — focus on oral traditions, reading, and creative writing, and, because we publish work by each student, represent for many their first acknowledged success with writing.

To help with WIC, I had the opportunity to go to and help set up a free workshop taught by the poet laureate of Texas, Carmen Tafolla. The class was taught at BiblioTech, the country’s first ever public ebook library. This was a valuable experience not just because I got to meet and

listen to an incredibly talented, celebrated author, but also gain insight into how BiblioTech was impacting literacy and popularizing literature by giving an underserved community access to technology (via readers, tablets, computers and digital books) they traditionally can not afford.

As the registrar and proctor of this workshop, which focused on empowering participants to write about the communities they come from, I got to see the incredible (and naturally occurring) diversity of the participants: the incredibly varied ages, nationalities, and backgrounds of the people who had jumped at the opportunity to take this free class was representative, to me, of the way writing impacts and empowers anyone who is given the opportunity.

I learned some important lessons from this internship and have gained a better understanding of the nonprofit sector, the literary community of writers, and of my own strengths and weaknesses. I now feel like my own career interests have narrowed toward the educational side of creative writing, as I saw it in the WIC program. I felt very validated by the process of taking writing to a community that can benefit so much from sharing their stories and would like to do that someday. I learned to be flexible and adaptable in a fluid job and how to communicate and facilitate understanding between many different co workers with varying schedules and personality types. This has been an amazing opportunity, and I have loved learning about and even meeting writers whose work I admire. Overall, this experience has been valuable to me, and helped me specify the way I want to incorporate community engagement and writing into my future career.