

Summer Internship Report 2017

Maren Johnson, C'17

Hometown: Tallahassee



**Jaffery Academy
Special Education Needs Department
Arusha, Tanzania**

Provide an overview of the organization/research project and a summary of your responsibilities, tasks, and/or projects.

I was a photographic literacy intern at Jaffery Academy, Arusha, Special Education Needs Department. The internship responsibilities were to help the school compile photography resources. These included taking photos throughout the school day and filming classroom activities, and then using those materials to make a website, a short documentary, and a photobook. Another one of our responsibilities was to build a photographic literacy curriculum for the school's students, teach the teachers how to use the curriculum in their classrooms, and then sit in on the photographic literacy workshops in each classroom to give the teachers feedback on how they were using the curriculum.

During your internship, what did you accomplish or how did you make a difference? In what ways did you grow in your professional and technical skills?

The greatest difference I saw was within the students. When we first introduced our photo literacy workshop to them, they were so interested in what we were doing, and seemed to enjoy the creative outlet. This school emphasizes accomplishment of academic goals and life skills and this was a great addition to the art curriculum, teaching them to think critically about what they are looking at. The professional skills that I developed while working here were learning to work around other people's

schedules, setting up and keeping appointments, being flexible when there were changes in the schedule, working with students, faculty, and the administration of the school, helping to plan classroom activities and a parent-teacher conference, and meeting with my supervisor to go over the work that we had done. The technical skills I developed were learning how to use Adobe Premiere to create a documentary, learning how to develop photos on Adobe Lightroom, learning how to set up and record using a handheld mic, and learning how to set up and edit a website.

Describe a problem that you helped to solve at your internship. What skills or knowledge from your education at Sewanee helped you address the problem?

One of the problems that I helped solve during this internship was the website. In the past, the school has had several different groups of volunteers set up websites, but none of them are able to be used or contain very much information. I set up the website, wrote the informational material and compiled educational resources, and added the photos of students and logos of the supporting companies. I also wrote a guide for the school on how to add to the website, so that they could refer back to it if they have any questions in the future on how to set things up. My writing skills were particularly useful for this, because the school needed concise but descriptive information on their website because one of their main goals is community outreach. I also used the knowledge I have about website design from various Sewanee classes to set up the best-looking and most effective website possible.

In what way were your teamwork skills strengthened?

My teamwork skills were mostly strengthened during my work with Hunter. I knew going into this internship that Hunter and I have very different skill sets. This meant that everything we did had to be teamwork, because everything needed to run by two sets of eyes. I learned a lot about collaboration with someone else, and I learned that it was okay to admit to not being able to do something or to pick up the slack from someone else. After we finished filming at the school, we had a huge amount of raw material to go through, and picking clips to use can be a very time-intensive process, because you have to watch all of them, then choose the best ones of the type you want, then pick how long you want that clip to be. Hunter got very overwhelmed with this amount of material, so I traded places with him and worked on the video while he worked on materials for the photographic literacy workshop. That was the best thing about working with Hunter, we were able to trade off work so easily, so that everything we made was the best it could be because of our collaboration. I had only taken one photography class, so he helped me learn a lot about the aesthetics of design, and taught me how to do what he knew how to do so that we could both contribute as much as possible. We worked very well together, and neither of us had inhibitions on telling the other what we thought. Any time either of us had an idea or a critique of something the other had done, we were able to talk through why we thought something ought to be changed. This was vital to our work, and I am glad I was able to develop this skill because it was probably the most important part of our internship.

How did your internship affect your career plans?

I have the highest respect for teachers, and it was amazing to see how women here are able to help young, disabled students reach their full potential. I learned that I am very drawn to the idea of consulting, being an expert in something and then being able to help people have the best organizations they can. I now think that I will likely end up doing some sort of collaborative work with organizations that will help them to optimize their communication with the public.

In what ways did your internship cause you to encounter people of different backgrounds from your own? What steps did you take to communicate effectively with such persons? What did you learn from such persons' perspectives?

My internship was entirely with people of different backgrounds. Jaffery Academy is an Islamic school, and most of the teachers were Muslim. The most important step that I took to communicate effectively with the teachers and staff at the school was to learn as much as possible about Islam. Understanding the religion helped me to understand cultural practices and some of the internal politics better. It also helped me understand how to cope with the different practices during Ramadan, which took place during the first month of our internship. I made sure that all the communication I had with faculty at the school was following general norms of politeness, and I made sure to include my boss in everything, even if it was not directly pertaining to her, because here there is a hierarchy and everything has to go through the boss, especially when there are visitors. I learned from this that it is important to make sure that information is being shared continuously with everyone, because it ensures that everyone is on the same page and that nobody is feeling excluded from important information. I learned that many times in a developing country there is an assumption that the volunteers are more educated than everyone else, which is not necessarily true. After I recognized this, I tried to change people's perception of this idea.

Words of thanks to your internship funding donors:

Dear internship funding donor,

Thank you for helping me get to Arusha, Tanzania and for helping me have such a wonderful experience. Working with the students at the Special Education Needs Department was amazing, and I think I left them with a new way to think about the world of photos. There are many challenges to living abroad. However, they are not impossible to overcome, and I have learned a lot about myself and others during my time in Tanzania. Working with photography outside of an academic setting was hard work, but I learned all about how life as a photographer in the real world is. Tanzania is a beautiful country with very kind people, which makes it an ideal place to work in the summer, and I am already planning my next trip back here.

Thank you so much for supporting me in my aspiration to come here and work in such an amazing place with some very inspiring people,

Maren