

During the summer of 2015, I had the opportunity to work as a Social Media Intern for the Office of Public Affairs at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC. My responsibility involved supporting my supervisor, Hilary-Morgan Watt, the Social Media Manager, managing the digital face and publications for the museum, whether on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram or on the museum-run blog. Content produced tended to focus on recent exhibitions opening at the museums, events that museum sponsor such as World Ocean Day, educational information about specimens or areas encompassed by the museum, and updates on ongoing research or initiatives run by NMNH researchers. During my summer, I was able to work on several projects that covered many of these focused areas.

One of my first major projects was an Instagram takeover, involved utilizing the museum's active Instagram page to post photos and details over the course of a week about various specimens displayed in the Geology, Gems and Minerals Hall in the museum, given my background in geology. Several weeks of taking photos, writing descriptions, editing, and fact checking were completed to prepare for the week of content. During the takeover, I would post 2-3 photos a week, covering a number of topics in geology which provided insight for the general public into natural processes and research methods used by researchers. In addition to posting the images themselves, I would answer comments and questions posted by the public about the images and descriptions. During this project, I got a better understanding of the important role that social media plays in reaching out to new audiences to come visit the museum and educating the general public within the confines of social media's instantaneous nature.

One of my other major projects that I worked on were a number of blogposts written for the museum's main blog, *Unearthed*. These blogposts required a substantial amount of research, whether finding relevant articles and stories from the internet or reading through scientific articles and documents found in the Smithsonian archives. Most of the blogposts that I wrote benefited from my geology studies, particularly a set of posts written on Icelandic geology, due to the opening of a temporary exhibit on Icelandic photography in July. Even with my familiarity, the blogposts still required extensive research and editing to be accurate and understandable for a general audience. Some subjects of blog posts I had little familiarity with, particularly one written on the history of the specimen of *Ceratosaurus* from the museum's fossil collection, offering a chance to learn about paleobiology, museum studies, and museum history. After spending my four years at Sewanee learning how to write well-crafted and detailed scientific articles and papers, writing for a general audience was a particular challenge I faced this summer. The importance of being accurate yet communicating on a comprehensible level without "dumbing down" the information, and remain compelling and engaging was an interesting but enjoyable task I faced across my projects this summer, but particularly within the blogposts.

My time working at the National Museum of Natural History was incredibly enjoyable and insightful, making it all the more difficult to have to leave at the end of it. While my biggest struggle during the summer was communicating effectively with a general audience, the experience I received from it was invaluable, particularly right after graduation. As I prepare to focus on my scientific career, hoping to study and communicate on geological hazards such

volcanoes and earthquakes, this ability to be accurate and clear on complex systems such as these hazards is key, and this internship provided an important introduction and reminder. I also became more familiar with how to use digital platforms to provide clear and important information in brief snippets, which can also be vital when dealing with natural disasters. My summer with the National Museum of Natural History is one I feel incredibly fortunate to take part in after graduating from Sewanee, giving me a chance to use my knowledge I acquired from my education there, while also learning new, important skills for my future career goals.