

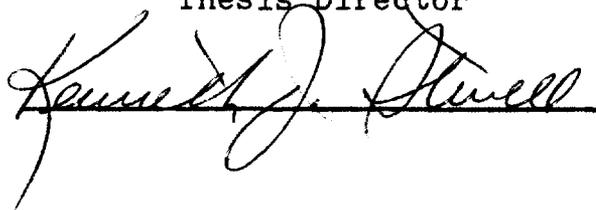
INTERNSHIPS:
An ACTION Guide to Getting Experience in Journalism

An Honors Project (ID 499)

By

Charlene Mires

Thesis Director

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Kenneth J. Stowell", written over a solid horizontal line.

Ball State University

Muncie, Indiana

May 1979

INTERNSHIPS

**An ACTION Guide to Getting
Experience in Journalism**

**by Charlene Mires
Winter 1978-79**

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I. The Employment Picture

A student planning a career in journalism today is among over 70,000 other declared majors and minors in the field. There are enough college journalism students to fill every existing journalism job in the country.

These dismal statistics are the result of an explosion of J-school enrollment during the 1970s. Spurred by the Watergate era's investigative reporters and glamorized in the film accounts that followed, journalism gained a new following.

The flood of students into journalism programs has created a tremendous challenge for those seriously interested in journalism careers. Overcoming the statistics to become a working journalist has become as much a part of journalism school as lectures and classwork.

Is talent enough?

Is journalism school enough?

Students in college today are finding that statistics can be defied through a commitment to getting experience in journalism.

II. The One-Two-Three Approach to a Career

Most students will find there are three interlocking steps to making sure a job will be available at graduation time.

ONE. Although some editors still look upon journalism school as inferior to on-the-job training, most see it as a valuable boost because it indicates a serious interest in journalism.

For instance, these editors gave their views to Ben Bagdikian for Atlantic Monthly:

"My experience has been that people who are interested in journalism as a profession attend journalism schools."

Richard Leonard, editor
The Milwaukee Journal

"Generally, they demonstrate a more sophisticated commitment to journalism and understanding of its demands, plus a working knowledge of the beginner skills."

John Quinn
Gannett newspapers

"In general, they have a better background of the kinds of things they don't learn on the job: the posture of a newspaper in a democratic society, libel, privacy law rudiments."

Bernard Lyons, editor
Lafayette (Ind.) Journal
and Courier

TWO. Even if an employer is a firm believer in journalism education, he is not likely to hire an applicant who does not have proven abilities in journalism. This means getting experience, either through campus publications or through journalism internships.

THREE. Identifying employers and presenting your qualifications appropriately and effectively also is

paper was understaffed."

The type of work you do as an intern will largely depend on your ability and your determination to obtain challenging assignments during your internship.

IV. Obtaining an Internship

Obtaining a journalism internship is not a difficult process, but it is one that requires patience and persistence. There are several steps in the process:

1. Identifying employers
2. Defining goals and skill areas
3. Preparing a resume
4. Writing cover letters
5. Preparing a portfolio
6. The interview
7. The followup

1. Identifying employers

There is no complete directory of internship opportunities. Therefore, the most effective way to identify prospective employers is to contact them yourself. This will let the employer know you are interested in his organization.

Two directories will help you locate names and addresses for inquiring about internships: the Ayer Directory of Publications, which lists all publications, and the Editor & Publisher Yearbook, which lists daily and weekly newspapers.

Always write to a specific person, not just to "Dear Editor." In your letter, include: who you are, what type of job you are interested in, an offer to send resume and clips and to schedule an interview, and a request for further information.

November 15, 1979

Mr. Joseph Smith, editor
The Journal
Indianapolis, IN 46246

Dear Mr. Smith:

As a junior journalism student at Ball State University, I realize that practical experience is an important part of my education.

If the Journal offers summer intern positions in reporting or copy editing, I would like to be considered an applicant. I would be glad to send a resume and samples of my work if a position is available.

Also, I would like to arrange for an interview during my Christmas (Dec. 20 - Jan. 6) or spring breaks (March 2 - 15).

I will look forward to your reply and any information you might have regarding summer employment.

Sincerely,

Thomas Johnson
Burkhart Hall, Box 77
Muncie, IN 47306

2. Defining goals and skill areas

In order to convince an employer that your skills meet his needs, you must be sure of what your abilities are. Identifying your skills and goals is a preliminary step to preparing a resume which will accurately portray your abilities.

JOURNALISM ABILITIES

Can you --

Rewrite a news release?

Write a straight news story?

Write a feature story?

Interview someone on the telephone?

Write police and fire stories?

Take pictures?

Write a outline?

Write a headline?

Edit copy?

Lay out a page?

Sell ads?

Design an ad?

Crop and proportion a picture?

Process film?

Prepare a news release?

Design a publicity brochure?

Write a public service announcement or radio commercial?

Proofread?

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Can you use --

Video display terminals?

Electric typewriter?

35mm camera?

Darkroom equipment?

Typesetting/headliner equipment?

Tape recorder?

PERSONAL TRAITS

C. Randall Powell, author of "Career Planning and Placement for the College Graduate of the '70s," suggests these key words for describing your skills and personal traits:

Action Words

actively	eliminated	motivated	responsible
accelerated	established	organize	responsibilities
adapted	evaluate	participated	revise
administer	expanded	perform	review
analyze	expedite	plan	schedule
approve	founded	pinpointed	significantly
coordinate	generate	program	simplicity
conceived	increased	proposed	set up
conduct	influence	proved	solve
completed	implemented	provide	strategy
control	interpret	proficient	structure
created	improve	recommend	streamline
delegate	launched	reduced	successfully
develop	lead	reinforced	supervise
demonstrate	lecture	reorganized	support
direct	maintain	revamped	teach
effect	manage		

Self-Descriptive Words

active	broad-minded	diplomatic	enthusiastic
adaptable	conscientious	disciplined	extroverted
aggressive	consistend	discrete	fair
alert	constructive	economical	forceful
ambitious	creative	efficient	imaginative
analytical	dependable	energetic	independent
attentive	determined	enterprising	logical

(Self-Descriptive Words)

loyal	personable	reliable	sophisticated
mature	pleasant	resourceful	systematic
methodical	positive	respective	tactful
objective	practical	self-reliant	talented
optimistic	productive	sense of humor	will travel
perceptive	realistic	sincere	will relocate

Goals

Any potential employer will be interested in how you propose to apply the experience you gain with his or her organization. Are you interested in --

Advertising -- sales
design
copy writing

Newspaper -- writing
copy editing
photography
layout/design

Magazine -- writing
editing
production
photography

Public relations

Journalism teaching

In determining your goals, answer these questions:

What do you hope to be doing --

--in your internship?

--when you graduate?

--five years after graduation? Ten years?

What is your ultimate career goal?

3. Writing the resume

Writing a resume is no more than a summary of your goals and skills. The resume is an advertisement for your abilities -- it is usually the first impression an employer will receive of you.

A resume should be:

Neatly typed -- a carbon ribbon makes the cleanest impression.

Error-free -- no typographical or spelling mistakes.

Concise -- use as few words as possible to present your qualifications.

Every resume should include:

Campus and home addresses and phone numbers

Career goals

Pertinent experience

Education

You might also want to include:

References

Personal information, such as hobbies and extracurricular activities or awards.

Resumes can be duplicated by any means available which will make a good, clean copy. Offset printing produces the most professional-looking resume, but may not be practical if few copies are needed. In most cases, a photocopy is sufficient.

It is not necessary to have a lot of experience to write a good resume. For instance, these sample resumes are for a student whose only experience is as a newspaper carrier:

PERSONAL DATA SHEET

Joseph Doitall
 23 Adams Road
 Jefferson, NY 15926 Telephone: (518) 789-0000

Personal Single 5 Feet, 10 Inches
 150 Pounds Age 18

Professional Objectives Currently seeking part-time employment while in school.
 Ultimate objective: Manager of major retail outlet of a large national chain.

Education High school diploma: Jefferson High School, 1976
 Major: College preparatory curriculum

Experience Jefferson Daily News, Inc., Jefferson, N.Y. Paperboy:
 1974 Successfully maintained a paper route with approximately
 to seventy-five customers. Started with forty-five customers
 1976 and expanded to seventy-five customers within two years.
 Collected and accounted accurately for all monies received.
 Built good customer relations. Received several increases
 in salary as a result of superior performance. Worked
 well on my own and received many compliments from my c
 customers and employer.

1970 Yard and Grounds Maintenance: Did general gardening and
 to maintenance work. Received many referals from satisfied
 1974 customers.

Summer Work Earned 50 percent of school expenses from summer work.

Military Service None

Background and Interests Brought up in Jefferson, N.Y. Attended all local schools.
 Very active in sports. Enjoy baseball, fishing, camping
 and waterskiing.

References References will be supplied upon request.

In the paperboy resumes, we find two different presentations, one based on skills and the other based on actual job experience.

The typical journalism internship applicant has accumulated skills through classes, work on a campus publication and perhaps a practicum class. The student usually has some job experience that is not directly related to his or her journalism goals.

One of the best resume approaches for a journalism job combines the two presentations in the paperboy resumes on the preceding pages. That is: first tell the employer what you have done, then tell him how that will help you succeed in a journalism job.

There are a number of forms for typing a resume (see appendix), but the sample on the following page illustrates the basic elements of a good resume.

RESUME

Winter 1978-79

THOMAS JOHNSON

Campus address: Burkhart Hall, Box 77
Muncie, IN 47306
(317) 285-4137

Home address: 219 River Rd.
Indianapolis, IN 46224
(317) 897-2865

CAREER OBJECTIVES

My immediate goal is to gain newspaper experience with a summer reporting internship. My long-range goal is to be a reporter at a metropolitan daily newspaper.

EDUCATION

Currently a junior at Ball State University, majoring in journalism and minoring in political science and natural resources.

I have completed all basic journalism requirements, as well as advanced courses in newswriting and copy editing.

EXPERIENCE

Staff reporter at Ball State Daily News for the last three quarters. Covered Off Campus Association beat, which involved covering meetings, writing at least two other stories per week, and initiating my own story ideas.

Dining Service employee, Ball State University, since September 1976. Worked approximately 20 hours per week to help pay tuition and room and board. Promoted to shift supervisor during last school year.

Recreation supervisor, Indianapolis Department of Parks and Recreations, summers of 1977 and 1978. Developed leadership and ability to work under pressure by planning and supervising daily recreation program for 30 elementary school-age children.

Sports stringer, Topics Newspapers, winter 1975-76. Covered high school football and basketball for weekly newspaper group.

ACTIVITIES

Member of Society of Professional Journalists/Sigma Delta Chi; Burkhart Hall activities chairman; Residence Hall Association representative; member of Delta Chi social fraternity; participant in intramural football and basketball.

4. Writing cover letters

Every resume should be accompanied by a cover letter explaining exactly what position you are applying for and offering to arrange an interview at the employer's convenience.

December 1, 1979

Mr. Joseph Smith, editor
The Journal
Indianapolis, IN 46246

Dear Mr. Smith:

I was glad to hear from you that the Journal will be offering summer internships next year. As you requested, I have enclosed a resume and samples of my writing in application for the reporting intern position.

My Christmas break will begin Dec. 20, and I would like to arrange an interview with you sometime during the holidays. I will call you next week to set up a definite time.

I look forward to meeting with you and discussing the intern program at the Journal.

Sincerely,

Thomas Johnson
Burkhart Hall, Box 77
Muncie, IN 47306

Note from the above example: You have reminded the editor that you have already written to him once and that you are responding to his letter. You have pointed out that you are following his instruction by sending a resume and writing samples. You have shown your interest in the internship by offering to come to the office for an interview.

Also, you have taken the burden of arranging the interview away from the editor by indicating you will call to make the arrangements.

A note about sending clips: When sending samples of your work, photocopies are sufficient. Never assume your material will be returned. Send stories in 8½ x 11 form, not in their varied sizes as cut out of the newspaper or magazine.

5. Preparing a portfolio

The time between sending the resume and actually going for the interview can be spent preparing a portfolio, or clip file.

The portfolio should include all your published work, put together in a way that is easy for the interviewer to look at. Almost any type of scrapbook or notebook can be used.

There are different ways to put together a portfolio and each has its advantages.

Chronologically - a chronologically arranged portfolio shows that you have worked consistently in building up your clip file. It enables an interviewer to observe your progress.

Type of work - a portfolio arranged according to type of story (feature, news, sports, etc.) makes it easier to find a particular kind of story. It is helpful if an employer is interested in your ability in a specific kind of writing.

Quality - a portfolio put together with your best work at the front allows you to have some control over what an

interviewer sees first, and may influence his overall impression of your work.

The key to arranging a good portfolio is to make it well organized and easy to read. The most professional-looking portfolios have one item per page, labeled with the date and place of publication.

6. The interview

A prospective employer who is impressed with the resume and clips you have provided him will contact you to set up an interview. If he does not call you, call him yourself and request an interview.

When you go for the interview, take your portfolio and an extra copy of your resume, especially if there has been some change from the one you originally sent the employer.

Also take photocopies of some of your best work, especially if you have not already sent clips to the employer. Offer to leave the copies with the interviewer -- this way you can leave behind something more than just a vague impression of your work.

In addition to these items, take along a small notebook and a pencil or pen, just in case you need to make note of something during the interview.

Upon arriving for the interview, you may be asked to fill out an application form. This will usually be a standard form used for all organization employees, and will require

information about education, employment history and references. Having a copy of your resume will help you fill out this form. It will also be helpful to have a list of references, including addresses and phone numbers, to refer to.

Question time

The process of identifying your skills and goals and putting together a resume will help you in answering questions during the interview. However, it will help to prepare yourself for types of questions that commonly come up in interviews. Depending on the interviewer, the session may relay on a general "Tell me about yourself," or may depend on more specific questions, such as:

How did you get started in journalism?

What do you like best about journalism?

Have you had any experience working under deadlines?

What kind of job do you want when you graduate?

What do you expect to be doing ten years from now?

What qualities do you have that you think will make you a successful reporter (editor, etc.)?

Tell me about your interests and hobbies.

How do you spend your spare time?

What kind of journalism activity have you been involved in lately?

What did you like best/least about your last job?

The interview is also the time for you to find out more about the internship. If the interviewer does not give you details, you should ask:

Exactly what kinds of responsibilities do interns have?

How many interns do you usually have?

What kind of hours will I work? Is there a chance of overtime work?

What is the salary?

Will I need to have my own transportation?

Is there any type of pre-internship training?

When would I be expected to start work?

Who would I be working under? Can I meet him/her?

Where have interns lived in previous years?

When will you make a decision about who to hire? Will you let me know, or shall I get back in touch with you?

7. The followup

If you have been successful through each step of identifying and applying for an internship and receive an offer from an employer, the next stage in the process is followup.

First, respond immediately to the internship offer. Reply in writing and state the terms which you understand will apply to the job.

In your letter, ask for a copy of the newspaper's stylebook (if it differs from AP or UPI) and for a technology manual if the paper has a video display terminal system.

You should also make arrangements to read the publication regularly. If it is not available in a library, arrange for a subscription.

(sample followup letter)

March 10, 1980

Mr. Joseph Smith, editor
The Journal
Indianapolis, IN 46246

Dear Mr. Smith:

I was very pleased to receive your offer of a summer reporting internship and will be glad to accept the job.

As we agreed during my interview with you, I understand I will be working with the city news editor five days a week at a salary of \$125 per week. I will be able to begin work any date after May 19 and continue as as late as Sept. 6.

If you use a stylebook other than Associated Press or United Press International, I would like to borrow a copy to study before I begin work. Also, is there a copy of your technology manual available?

Since our library does not subscribe to your paper, I would like to have copies sent to me at my campus address. Would you please let me know about the arrangements I will need to make for this?

Thank you for your confidence in my ability, Mr. Smith. I am looking forward to working with your staff at the Journal this summer.

Sincerely,

Thomas Johnson

V. Now I know what -- but when?

Your success in getting experience in journalism may be contingent upon being in the right place at the right time. It follows that all the effort you can muster will not be enough if you make your inquiries too late.

Some organizations, particularly large newspapers, may choose their interns as early as the December preceding the internship. Others may not make their selections until March or April.

When

What

November-December

Identify employers

December-January

Define goals and skill areas
Prepare resume
Write cover letters
Prepare portfolio

February-March

Interviews

April-May

Followup

VI. APPENDIX

Resume Alternatives

THOMAS JOHNSON

Campus address:
Burkhart Hall, Box 77
Muncie, IN 47306
(317) 285-4137

Home address:
219 River Rd.
Indianapolis, IN 46224
(317) 897-2865

CAREER
OBJECTIVES

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EDUCATION

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I have completed all basic journalism requirements, as well as advanced courses in newswriting and copy editing.

EXPERIENCE

Staff reporter at Ball State Daily News for the last three quarters.

Dining service employee, Ball State University, since September 1976.

Recreation supervisor, Indianapolis Department of Parks and Recreation, summers of 1977 and 1978.

Sports stringer, Topics Newspapers, winter 1975-76.

ACTIVITIES

Member of Society of Professional Journalists/Sigma Delta Chi; Burkhart Hall activities chairman; Residence Hall Association representative; member of Delta Chi social fraternity; participant in intramural football and basketball.

Resume of Thomas Johnson

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Recreation supervisor, Indianapolis Department of Parks and Recreation, summers of 1977 and 1978. Planned and supervised recreation program for 30 elementary school-age children.

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