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Reflection Essay

Over the past 14 weeks, I have had the opportunity to work on The Journal of the Plague Year digital archive with Arizona State University. I learned a vast amount over the course of the internship, such as how to write press releases, collection plans, blog posts and other forms of advertising for the archive. I also learned about the ins and outs of archiving and the behind-the-scenes considerations that are involved in building and maintaining an archive.

This was my very first graduate school class and as such, I wasn't sure that starting with an internship was the best idea, but after the first week or two I realized that this was the perfect way to start, since it was basically getting a preview of the type of work someone in the public history field would be doing and I got very excited, determined that this was the type of career I wanted to pursue.

The writing for publication skills that I have started to develop, I think will be extremely valuable as those skills are not just applicable to public history, but any career field really. The oral history project also provided the opportunity to work on my interviewing skills. Oral histories are vital to the study of history and even though this is an area I still need to work on, at least now I have the basic foundation to build on.

For my collection within the archive, I chose to focus on Law Enforcement, as that is a community that is near and dear to my heart. I currently work in law enforcement and I have family that does as well. When we discussed silences in our weekly readings, we talked about how to identify silences and how to work towards filling them. I noted that there were very few if any, submissions to the archive from the perspective of law enforcement so I wanted to work towards filling that silence.

Overall, this internship was a great experience and entry into both the public history field and graduate studies. I know that the skills I have developed here will serve me well as I continue my graduate studies!