At the end of my junior year here at Kutztown University I knew that graduation was soon approaching and that soon I would have to concentrate on finding a “real” job. This can be a terrifying thought as an undergraduate student, and I knew that with today’s economy that I needed to boost my resume in a way that would help me stand out from other applicants. As an education Library Science major, I have had many great observation/teaching experiences throughout my undergraduate career, but since having a library science degree can enable you to work in either a school or public library, I knew that in order to gain more knowledge about the field I would have to expand my experiences in the public library field as well.

In order to gain more experience in this field, I began to look at internships. To be honest I didn’t really know what I was looking for or what to start with, but after talking with both my professors and advisors I knew I wanted to pursue work in the archive field of library science. I chose to look into the archives field because it combined my interest history as well as my pursuit of becoming a librarian. I had also taken a class here at Kutztown that had sparked my interest as well.

After many long weeks of scanning websites and talking with my advisor and professors, I was luckily able to find out about my local public library who had contacted KU requesting that an intern be sent their way. Although the library said that they had originally wanted an intern to help with the children’s area of the library, I decided to apply anyway. The library was thrilled to have an interested student, but they told me that they didn’t have a specific archive department for me to work in. That was where my class at Kutztown came in. After speaking with both the director and volunteer coordinator of the library, it was decided that I would use my knowledge about archives that I had gained from my class to help them start/create an archive of their own within the library. Since the library was located right in the heart of Lancaster City, the library had gathered many historical documents, maps, and books that were important to the creation of Lancaster city but had no idea what to do with them. It was decided that as the intern, I would use my knowledge from my archive class to not only document what and how many of each item the library has, but I would also be figuring out a way to store and
I began work on this internship in the summer right after I finished up my spring semester. To be honest, my first few days as the intern were very overwhelming. There seemed to be so much for me to look through and catalogue, but after the first week I seemed to have a system down. Each day I was to go through a section or area of the library and document any item that I considered to be ‘archival’. I created a list of the items that matched my requirements and documented them in an excel spreadsheet. By the end of the internship I ended up with 6-7 very long excel lists that had what each item was, the type of archival condition the item was in, where the item was found, and also how the item should be stored in the future. I created these lists for the library so that when they were able to fully create a specific archive space that they would have all the information already laid out for them.

When I first began to look through the library to look for archival items I didn’t know what to expect, but what I ended up finding truly surprised me. Over the course of my internship I was able to find items such as a 46 star American flag found stuffed in an old hat box that was just lying in the attic, a manuscript that was printed on vellum that we believed to be from the 17th or 18th century, and my favorite was an old bible that was a gift to the library from Juliana Penn who was the wife of William Penn.

Overall I truly enjoyed my internship and all the opportunities and experiences I was able to gain from it. I feel as though I was able to not only gain experience within the public library field, but I was also able to make contacts and relationships that can help me in my future career outside of KU. I highly recommend to any undergraduate student, but specifically library science students to pursue an internship before they graduate. I feel as though it has opened so many doors for me in helping to expand my experience and knowledge within the library field and I am honestly excited to share my experience with others. For those looking for an internship I suggest that they look early and everywhere. Just because you are looking for a very specific field to work in doesn’t mean that it limits the number of internships you can apply to. Look into every opportunity that interests you because the one you land may just surprise you.