

Request for Haverford College intern

Mütter Museum/Historical Library/Wood Institute for the History of Medicine
The College of Physicians of Philadelphia
19 South 22nd Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103
http://www.collphyphil.org/site/mutter_museum.html

Description of organization:

“The Birthplace of American MedicineSM” and the oldest professional organization in the country, The College of Physicians of Philadelphia was founded in 1787 “to advance the science of medicine and to thereby lessen human misery.” Today, over 1,500 Fellows (elected members) continue to convene at the College and work towards better serving the public. Throughout its 200 year history, the College has provided a place for both medical professionals and the general public to learn about medicine as both a science and as an art. This historic spirit continues in our current mission: advancing the cause of health, while upholding the ideals and heritage of medicine. The College collections exist within the Mütter Museum and the Historical Medical Library.

The Mütter Museum is one of the oldest medical museums in the country and houses one of the greatest collections of 18th and 19th century medical teaching specimens. The collection is comprised of approximately 25,000 objects including human remains (over 1,200 biological wet specimens, 1,400 human bones, lithics, dried preparations and corrosions); 12,000+ medical instruments and apparatus, primarily dating between 1750 and the present; approximately 400 anatomical models in plaster, wax, paper- mâché and plastic; 1,700 historical medical illustrations in the form of lantern slides, photographs and prints; and memorabilia of outstanding physicians and scientists. Our collections provide a particular insight into human biology and the history of medicine and medical education. By placing medicine and science in a broader context, we encourage patrons to consider the cultural and social aspects of health and medicine.

Many of our collections reflect the interest and involvement of Philadelphia physicians in national and international affairs. During the Civil War, items from the Mütter Museum were loaned to the Army to assist in the training of surgeons; in exchange, the Museum received specimens and photographs (described below) of battle injuries from the Army Medical Museum in Washington D.C. (now the National Museum of Health and Medicine). In 1865, a messenger from the Surgeon General conveyed to the Museum a specimen connected with one of the nation’s most tragic events: a “piece of the thorax of J. Wilkes Booth, assassin of President Lincoln,” which had been removed during the autopsy conducted by Philadelphia surgeon Joseph Janvier Woodward. The Museum continues to receive medical instruments and specimens donated by Fellows, other physicians, and their families. Recent acquisitions include a 1949 Emerson iron lung, 670 brain specimens encased in acrylic, and a large collection of 19th-century fracture splints.

Established in 1788, the Historical Medical Library was Philadelphia’s central medical library for over 150 years, serving its medical schools, hospitals, physicians and other health

professionals. Today, it is an independent research library devoted to the history of medicine and serves hundreds of scholars, health professionals, students, and popular writers each year.

The College's collection of early printed books includes more than four hundred incunables, or editions printed before 1501. Among our more than 12,000 other rare books are the majority of editions that laid the basis of modern biomedicine—including one of the world's best copies of William Harvey's *De motu cordis* [On the Motion of the Heart] (1628) which first described the circulation of the blood, and two copies of *De humani corporis fabrica* [On the Fabric of the Human Body] (1543) by Andreas Vesalius, which was responsible for the later development of both modern anatomy and modern medical illustration. Among the Library's first acquisitions was the founding book of modern pathology, *De sedibus et causis morborum* [On the Seats and Causes of Disease] by Giambattista Morgagni, published in Venice in 1761; it was presented by the author to visiting Philadelphia physician John Morgan, who later donated it to the College.

In addition to its rare books and 19th- and 20th-century collections, the College Library is notable for its manuscripts and archives. Within this collection are the College's own archives, the archives of other Philadelphia medical institutions, and letters, case books, and student notebooks that document the personal life and professional practice of doctors in the Philadelphia region and around the world.

Proposed work for an intern:

During the summers of 2010 and 2011, the College benefitted greatly from the work Haverford students on topics related to the Civil War, including the compilation of bibliographies and lists pertinent to a planned 2013 exhibit on Civil War medicine, and a search for historic medical photographs for a book on the history of the College. The College proposes additional Civil War research to support the exhibit, web-based educational materials, and a planned book. Students would work with the collections of both the museum and library.

The primary Civil War project entails conducting collections research in support of the exhibit on Civil War medicine scheduled to open in 2013, *Broken Bodies, Suffering Spirits: Medicine in Philadelphia during the Civil War*. The main project is a book, to appear in 2015, which absorbs the exhibit and features the diary of a Civil War physician which has never been published. The chief related task for the intern will be to create a line-by-line transcription of the diary (which covers about 20 months of the war) by examining a hi-res copy of the original diary, in comparison with a transcript made by the family that owns the diary. Additionally, the intern will search through library materials, both published and unpublished, including images, to identify and describe resources germane to planning the exhibit. The intern will work closely with the exhibit curators and museum director on these tasks: the intern will be credited in the proposed book and in exhibit materials. Some activities may include drafting exhibit text. Research may take place in both the Historical Medical Library and Mütter Museum.

The projects are scalable to the abilities and backgrounds of the students and the time they can devote. Projects are supervised by the librarian, museum curator, or the director.

Skills and experience offered:

The internship affords a rare experience to work with primary materials within one of the most important special collections libraries in the country. Students would learn archival methods, exhibition practices, cataloguing, and electronic organization and management of records. Students with some skills in librarianship, archives, or information technology would be valuable for College work. Students would need to be meticulous, careful with rare and fragile materials, and be well organized. An ability to express oneself well in writing is important.

Challenges for undergraduate students:

This work requires maturity and self-discipline in attending to the meticulous requirements of working with old documents and objects: sensitivity to wear and tear, respect for the materials, and a sense of their value. The work may be semi-independent in that the student may be working out of sight of the librarian but will need to be inquisitive and not hesitant about asking questions.

Rewards for interns:

As noted above, this internship is a rare opportunity to work directly with primary materials in the history of medicine and learn the protocols for such work. The College draws much interest each year from prospective interns, although few are chosen. The College places priority on providing students with meaningful and necessary work. It is important to the College to work with “feeder” institutions of higher learning to create more understanding of the importance of historic collections in scholarship and public understanding.

Conditions of work:

Work takes place during normal weekday working hours, Monday-Friday. No evening or weekend work is anticipated. No travel is anticipated.

Supervising the student:

The librarian or curator will train and directly supervise the student(s). The director (Hicks) will oversee the student’s work.