1. Background

Please Touch Museum, the Children’s Museum of Philadelphia (PTM) was founded in 1976 and was the first children’s museum to focus exclusively on young children ages birth to seven years. Our mission is to change a child’s life as they discover the power of learning through play. In 2008 PTM moved to Memorial Hall in Fairmount Park, a National Historic Landmark built for the 1876 Centennial Exhibition.

Today, PTM is a multidisciplinary organization, providing exhibits and programs in the visual and performing arts, including theater, music, dance, literacy, humanities, math, and science. As a leading 21st century children’s museum, PTM’s exhibits, museum experiences, and educational programs are developed to engage children and foster the intellectual, social, and emotional skills necessary to be successful in the classroom, in life, and in future careers.

PTM’s collection is one of the largest of children’s toys in the country, with thousands of playthings from the last 60 years making appearances in cases scattered throughout the museum. Many of these cases are in need of rotation and/or resigning, something that cannot really be done without a complete inventory of our storage space. PTM is also looking to begin selecting items for a “play collection” of durable toys in good condition for children to handle and play with, reflecting our mission to “change a child’s life as they discover the power of learning through play.”

2. Project Description
The intern will receive training in the use of our PastPerfect database (collections management software) and in general collections management practices. They will gain skills in documenting, condition reporting, and handling museum objects, and other important areas related to collections management. They will also gain the experience of having designed and carried out a short-term project in cataloguing and collections research. This internship will be particularly valuable for students interested in a museums, archives, or research career.

The internship will focus on three primary areas:

- **Inventory**: The intern will assist in an inventory of the PTM collections. Tasks will include photographing and documenting collections objects, completing condition reports, and assisting with moving/repackaging some objects. Throughout the inventory process, the intern will also be encouraged to identify potential objects for inclusion in the “play collection.”
- **Cataloguing**: The intern will be trained in using PTM’s PastPerfect database (collections management software) and have the opportunity to design and execute a cataloguing project in a collections area of their interest. For example, if the intern is interested in action figures, they may select a group of 20-30 related objects to update catalogue records for.
- **In-Depth Research**: The Please Touch Museum has the largest collection of children’s toys in the country, but has very little background information on its contents. Toys provide a fascinating lens through which to approach history; their popularity (or lack thereof) can reflect the interests, anxieties, fears, and obsessions of their time, as with the rise of atomic-themed toys in the 50’s or the sudden profusion of automated, learning-focused toys in the 70’s. Why did the fad of the pet rock die after mere months, while a set of plastic features driven into a leftover potato spawned one of the most successful and well-known toy lines since 1950? Is a child’s enthusiasm for Nerf guns and wooden swords natural or ghoulish?

The intern will be encouraged to consider the questions raised by various objects and be expected to choose a collections area of interest, researching its wider cultural significance, recording their findings, and finally presenting them to their supervisor in order to begin creating a resource for PTM’s education team.

3. **Intern’s Skills and Responsibilities**

The intern will need basic skills in computer usage (typing/word processing, completing forms, etc) and unsupervised research. Skills in basic photography (with a point-and-shoot camera, which will be provided) are a plus. They should be capable of managing time to complete tasks even when not directly supervised. The intern will be responsible for the projects outlined above, and will need to communicate their progress regularly to their direct supervisor.
4. **Outline for Orientation, Training, and Support**

Upon arrival, the intern will receive a general orientation from PTM’s Human Resources department, covering safety and security, professional standards, and other key topics. The intern will receive a security badge which must be kept on them at all times while in the museum building. They will be instructed in how to track their work time, lunch breaks, etc. This will be followed by an orientation to the collections workroom and office spaces, provided by the Museum Experience Collections Coordinator. The intern will receive assignment to a computer workstation and will be oriented to its use by a member of the PTM’s IT staff.

Specific training and supervision will be provided by the Museum Experience Collections Coordinator. This specific training will include hands-on demonstrations of proper collections handling methods, hands-on demonstrations of collections inventory practices, and training in collections management software. The Museum Experience Collections Coordinator will regularly monitor progress in the inventory by reviewing daily/weekly photography collection and inventory forms with the intern. The intern will be working collaboratively alongside the Museum Experience Collections Coordinator to complete the inventory as a “team task.”

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**Work Plan and Timeline**

**Results:** By the end of the 10-week internship, the intern will have successfully contributed to the inventory process, and completed a cataloguing project including at least 30-50 detailed catalogue records or record updates in an area of their interest.

**Timeline**

Week 1 – **Orientation and Introduction to Collections.** In the first week, the intern will be welcomed to PTM and provided with basic orientations covering safety and security, employee behavior and dress, professional standards, and other key topics. They will also be introduced to the collections by the Museum Experience Collections Coordinator, and begin baseline training in object handling and condition reporting. (Note: during this first week, the intern will also begin to select a collections area that they are interested in and would like to research further.)

Week 2 – **PastPerfect and Inventory Training.** In the second week, the intern will receive more detailed training in our PastPerfect collections management software. They will also receive training on the “how” and “why” of collections inventorying and begin the first steps of prepping for inventory work.

Week 3 – **Inventory.** In the third week, the intern will begin to actively inventory the collections space, taking photographs (a camera will be provided) and documenting the
locations of collections objects. (As the inventory continues, the intern will have the chance to begin selecting objects that they are interested in researching further, and will be given a period to conduct research during the week.)

Week 4 – **Inventory and Research Continues.**

Week 5 – **Cataloguing.** In the fifth week, the intern will receive in-depth training in PastPerfect and begin their first cataloguing project under the supervision of the Director of Research. During this week, the intern should finalize their selection of objects for research and begin inputting information.

Week 6 – **Cataloguing, Inventory and Research Continues**

Week 7 – **Cataloguing, Inventory and Research Continues.**

Week 8 – **Cataloguing, Inventory and Research Continues.** In the eighth week, the intern will continue current projects, but will also begin preparing a short presentation to PTM staff on their research project.

Week 9 – **Project Concludes/ Presentation.** In the final internship week, the intern will finish any outstanding work, and present their completed research findings to a group of PTM staff, to receive comments and feedback on their project.