

How to organize an internship – information from IGERT trainees

Eran Agmon: University of Basque Country, Spain 5/18/2013-6/30/2013

I worked with Ezequiel Di Paolo, at the University of Basque Country in San Sebastian for 6 weeks. During this time, I spent most of my time engaged in discussions with various individuals on the subject of enactive cognition. I also worked on some computer simulations in collaboration with my host and another professor at a nearby university.

I selected this institution because of the notable faculty who are relevant to my research subject matter of interest. I made my first contact with my host the November before the summer that I ended up going to the internship. I sent him an email to inform him of my interest, and my advisor also sent him an email to recommend me.

My host provided me with a desk in a shared office, and I went there 5 days a week. I arranged meetings regularly, and attended the various seminars and workshops that were hosted there often. I had three trips out of the city to meet with faculty at nearby universities. I also met with my host weekly to discuss the different simulations we were collaborating on.

I lived in researcher housing, which was near the university. This had to be arranged by my host. I walked to work from there, and took the bus to the city for shopping and recreation.

Is there anything you would like to have known before you embarked on your internship trip? I would have liked to have a more fully-formed research agenda ready before I came. Also, more time would have helped. 6 weeks felt pretty short.

Is there any advice you'd like to share? Make contact as early as possible, and begin discussing projects well before arriving at the institute.

Are you willing to have trainees contact you with followup questions? Absolutely. eagmon@indiana.edu

Rick Betzel: University of Cambridge, United Kingdom 7/1/2013-8/22/2013

I spent July-August of 2013 studying models of whole-brain anatomical networks in Dr. Edward Bullmore's lab in the Brain Mapping Institute at the University of Cambridge, in Cambridge, UK. I chose this institution and internship supervisor partly because of his renown but also because Dr. Bullmore's lab and my lab at IU have a strong relationship and have both collaborated and exchanged students/post-docs in the past.

Setting up the internship was surprisingly simple and informal – my advisor and I sent an email to Dr. Bullmore asking if he had room in his lab. Once he agreed, he sent an official invitation on Cambridge letterhead.

My routine in the lab was much like my routine in Bloomington: every day I would go into lab around 7 AM and leave around 5 PM or 6 PM. There were no official schedule, but the rest of the lab seemed to follow that timeline, so I did the same. I met bi-weekly with Dr. Bullmore to discuss the progress of my project.

The University of Cambridge, because it hosts many visiting scholars, has a program for placing them in housing. People around town who have hosted visitors before are allowed to place advertisements on the Accommodation Services website. Using that website, I could set an alert for the price and location that I wanted, and would get weekly notifications if an advertisement meeting those specifications became available. Ultimately, it was through this service that I found the apartment I stayed in, which I shared with one other person.

It was actually pretty difficult to find a place to stay – because I was only staying for a couple of months I could not sign a long-term lease. Almost all of the options I had to choose from were sublets. I would suggest making sure you draw up some kind of written agreement detailing payment arrangements and the like. *(Note from Rose: Any trainee who sublets accommodations or formally rents accommodations is required to submit a copy of their rental agreement with their reimbursement request. Informal sublet agreements can be drawn up based on online examples easily found on the Internet and they are acceptable to IU Travel. Ask Rose about this if you have questions.)*

The six weeks I was in Cambridge really was not long enough to do a whole project, even though I had a good idea of what I wanted to do and had discussed it ahead of time with Dr. Bullmore. If I could do the internship over, I would have chosen a much more manageable project – very specific, very circumscribed – so that there was a hope of getting a sizeable portion finished under Dr. Bullmore’s supervision.

Another piece of advice – in Europe almost all credit cards are EMV “chip” cards, whereas in the US we still use the magnetic “swipe” cards. Most of the places I shopped at did not give you the option of swiping your credit card, which limited where I could buy things. Check with your bank if you have the option of getting such a card. Also, if you’re leaving the country, you may also have to contend with foreign transaction fees. If you can, get a credit card that does not charge transaction fees. If you do not get a chip card without transaction fees, you might end up carrying around a lot of cash, which is not bad, but it seems needlessly risky.

Lastly, if you leave the country for an internship, it means you have to go through customs – bring your internship invitation letter and some document that states why you will be spending time in that country. I got held up on arrival, even though I had these documents.

I am willing to have trainees contact me with any questions regarding my experience. rbetz@indiana.edu

Aaron Fath: University of Leeds, the United Kingdom 5/23/2012-7/11/2102

I worked with Mark Mon-Williams at University of Leeds for about 6 weeks. I chose that location because they recently acquired a top-of-the-line force-feedback haptic interface that would suit my work. It was so new that I worked with an engineer to set up the thing, and then worked on designing some experiments. My advisor and Mark know each other very well, so it was pretty trivial to set up. I just had to write a proposal and get it approved by the IGERT. Mark is the head of the department, so he's busy, and we were working with new equipment he had no experience with so I pretty much made my own schedule.

I would strongly recommend putting effort into finding cheap accommodations since that adds up fast. It's easy to not care about expense if you think of it as the government's money, but it is a finite amount of money that has been given to you, so think of it as your money. I rented a room in a house instead of getting a hotel room, and paid about \$17 a night in one of the most expensive countries in the world. That has allowed me to pay for several conferences and still have enough left to probably do another internship. I would also recommend the rent-a-room route to have access to people who know the area and can give you advice, connect you to others, etc.

Joshua Williams: University of San Diego, CA 5/25/2013-7/6/2013

Please explain the Who, what, where, when, why of your internship? (With whom did you work? At which institution? For how long? Doing what type of research? Why/how did you choose that location?) I did an internship with Dr. Karen Emmorey at San Diego State University for approximately 6 weeks during the summer of 2013. I wanted experience in a sign language intensive lab that studied cognition. Karen Emmorey is the world leader in sign language research and has many resources. I helped with corpus and psycholinguistic research while I was there.

How did you select the institution and request the internship? What role did your advisor or other faculty member play in creating this opportunity? I selected this institution by previous contact with her. I had applied to be in her lab for graduate school, but ultimately I turned down the offer. However, I knew it would still be valuable, so I reached out to her. I also knew she was looking for internships via a NSF-funded website for sign language research (vl2.gallaudet.edu). My advisor had no part in creating the contact or facilitating the internship beyond writing a letter of support and helping figure out what I wanted to get out of the experience.

What was your daily routine like at your host institution? Every day I got to lab at about 7:30am and would do some data analysis that had come in overnight. I would also work on creating my own experiments. I also helped out with other’s experiment. Beyond experimental experience, I visited UCSD and SDSU for talks. My host was good at networking me with other SL researchers in the area.

Where did you live during your internship? How did you deal with day-to-day issues such as transportation? Any other mundane details that became important? I lived downtown San Diego after a debacle with subleasing and hostels. I lived in a fully-furnished, short-term living for visiting scholars. The only issue is that transportation was via the light rail which meant 2 hour round trip on the train each day. This meant getting up at 5:30 am every day and getting home around 6:30pm. The closest Whole Foods (or really any grocery store that accommodated my vegan lifestyle) was 20 minutes away by bus because downtown did not have those kinds of

stores. So there was a lot of walking and commuting time.

Is there anything you would like to have known before you embarked on your internship trip? Living situation. Where, why. It was hard. It didn't matter how much research, it really didn't matter. You find out a lot of things just living there. So I would ask every lab member you have access to ask about grocery stores, gyms, lab, on-campus stuff.

Is there any advice you'd like to share? Make sure your expectations are explicit from the beginning....like first email. I found that expectations were different upon emailing vs arriving vs leaving. It seemed as though there was some major miscommunication. This is an exciting and unique opportunity and you don't want it to be for nothing because of miscommunication and misaligned expectations.

Are you willing to have trainees contact you with followup questions? Sure. willjota@indiana.edu

Shane Zappettini: National University of Singapore Summer 2012

Please explain the Who, what, where, when, why of your internship? (With whom did you work? At which institution? For how long? Doing what type of research? Why/how did you choose that location?) I did my internship at Daiquin Li's behavioral ecology and sociobiology lab at National University of Singapore in summer 2012. I was there for 2.5 months, and was doing an experiment testing the costs of UV sexual signaling in the ornate jumping spider *C. Umbratica*.

What was your daily routine like at your host institution? I usually was either in the lab, or the field. If I was in the lab, then I would get there at 10am and usually stay until 4 or 5. If I was in the field, then it would vary.

Where did you live during your internship? How did you deal with day-to-day issues such as transportation? Any other mundane details that became important? I lived in a condominium. Transportation was easy as there was a subway across the street from my place, which stopped at NSU.

Is there anything you would like to have known before you embarked on your internship trip? The weather was atrocious. Mid 90s for the high with 90% humidity. I was not prepared for hours in the jungle with this (I should have packed more jungle-appropriate clothing).

Are you willing to have trainees contact you with followup questions? Sure. szappett@indiana.edu