

ON INTERNING AT ISLAND PRESS: TAKING THE PLUNGE



There is always an element of risk, of jumping into the unknown, when deciding to take a new job or internship. From my first day as an intern at Island Press, my colleagues treated me as part of the team and entrusted me with a significant level of responsibility despite my short tenure here.

The small size of Island Press means that interns here get exposure to many aspects of publishing—including acquisitions and editorial as well as production, sales, and marketing. On a day to day basis I work with the editorial staff reviewing book proposals, doing research for editors, preparing art packages, and processing authors' contracts.

Interning at Island Press is a wonderfully unique experience because in addition to being a publisher, they're also an environmental non-profit. Working in editorial, I've gotten exposure to the latest ideas in sustainability, climate change, green building, and other issues affecting the built environment. Part of interning with editorial is learning to investigate and critique the arguments and platforms of prospective authors, and the suitability of their projects for Island Press. Just as a liberal arts education teaches one to think and critique arguments, this process of learning to evaluate a proposed project for a publisher is a transferrable skill that can be used whether you end up in an environmental field or not.

What have I learned thus far in the internship? Editors have to be skilled in much more than preparing a manuscript for publication. They're just as likely to be spending their time advocating for their book to be published, networking with potential authors, or negotiating the sale of subsidiary rights. Especially in non-fiction, an author's platform and credentials will make or break a book's sales, and therefore its consideration for publication.

Another great thing that interns at Island Press have the opportunity to participate in is "IP 101," a day dedicated to learning about each department and how their work fits together to publish and market a successful book. Throughout my two months here so far, I've found it true that IP invests as much in its interns as they invest in IP. That's an amazing motivator, and one that makes me glad I "took the plunge" to spend my fall semester with Island Press.

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