

Sophia Burton

Internship Report

WAN- IFRA: The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers

This summer I had the incredible opportunity to intern with the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers in their Paris, France headquarters. WAN-IFRA is a global trades organization that currently represents more than 18,000 publications, 15,000 online sites and over 3,000 companies in more than 120 countries. Its primary aim is to promote press freedom along with newspaper and news publisher's economic independence, as the media plays a vital role in democracy. Specifically, I worked with WAN-IFRA's News Literacy and Youth Engagement department that focuses on cultivating an informed and civic-minded youth through print and digital newspaper engagement. The department employs a multitude of initiatives to achieve this, including their World Young Readers Prize. My assignments this summer were largely focused around coordinating this annual competition, which recognizes member newspapers with the best initiatives to engage the youth.

Organizing and managing the competition had many different phases, from early registration to the final judging panel, keeping my weeks interesting and diverse. My first two weeks were spent organizing member registrations and information in spreadsheet documents. In the following weeks, submissions started coming in. I reviewed the incoming entries and checked them to make sure they included the correct sections and information requested. In the cases when they did not, I would contact the host organization. I also revised the entries electronic formats when necessary to ensure that the judges could properly access them. After the initial administrative phases, I began to review the contents of the entries. This was the most interesting part of my internship as I got to see the different and creative ways used to engage the youth, which ranged from conventional school newspapers to kindergarten construction

campaigns and digital music platforms. There were a variety of different awards including Youth Newspaper of the Year, Going Green, Helping with Health, Brand, Making Social Local Mobile Connections, and Editorial. I loved seeing the innovative ways that newspapers were reaching out to the youth and looking at what types of initiatives were successful and why. I also learned about some of the local and regional issues different countries were focusing on and facing. While I went through each entry, I wrote up a brief summary describing the initiative, some of which were later published on the WAN-IFRA website. I also listed any possible questions I had for the host newspaper. I then began to coordinate the judging process, which was all done via internet. I created an online sharing profile for the judges where I uploaded the different newspaper submissions and my summaries. After the judges completed their score sheet, I compiled the different scores and comments of each of the judges. My internship advisor also invited me to participate in the process and act as a guest judge, which was quite an honor. As the scores came in, my boss and I worked closely to address the finishing touches and make sure that everything was in order. The entries really highlighted the organizations' message – the vital role that independent news organizations play in the democratic process and the fragility of press freedom in many countries.

When I was not working on the 2013 World Young Reader Prize, I was helping with other youth engagement initiatives. I researched different foundations and their country specific involvement finding good candidates for proposal funding. When things were slow in my department, I helped with different departments specifically, the Press Freedom department.

This internship was a great learning experience. It allowed me to better understand how international associations work and the many different pieces that must come together. More than anything, I gained a lot of knowledge about the industry and the different ways that

newspapers are implementing and changing their digital platforms. I worked in an office with six other people, most of us from different departments, and our conversations led to very interesting aspects of the industry. The organization also had a series, Lunch and Learn, which hosted different speakers covering relevant topics of the industry during select lunch breaks. These were quite interesting and informative, covering issues from differing perspectives. My favorite talk titled “The Twitterization of Journalism,” addressed the transformation occurring in professional journalism due to the interactive social media website, Twitter.

While I did have an overall great experience, there were certainly some hardships. It definitely took a while to get used to a French office environment. For example, in my opinion, American office environments are much more open and chatty, whereas French ones tend to be a little more quiet and closed off. That is not to say it was all-bad though! They also do take lengthy lunches, which was quite a nice break in that day. There were also points when my administrative work got quite repetitive. However, overall, I gained invaluable skills. I learned first hand the importance of communication in every task and about how an office works. I also really learned to approach problems and topics with more out of the box ideas. I was lucky to have a supervisor who gave me independence and really encouraged me to bring my own opinions to the table. I could not have done this without the generous funding from the Sewanee Tonya Fund. Thank you to all that made this possible.