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MSW Interns at Public Libraries: Fostering Collaboration For Change

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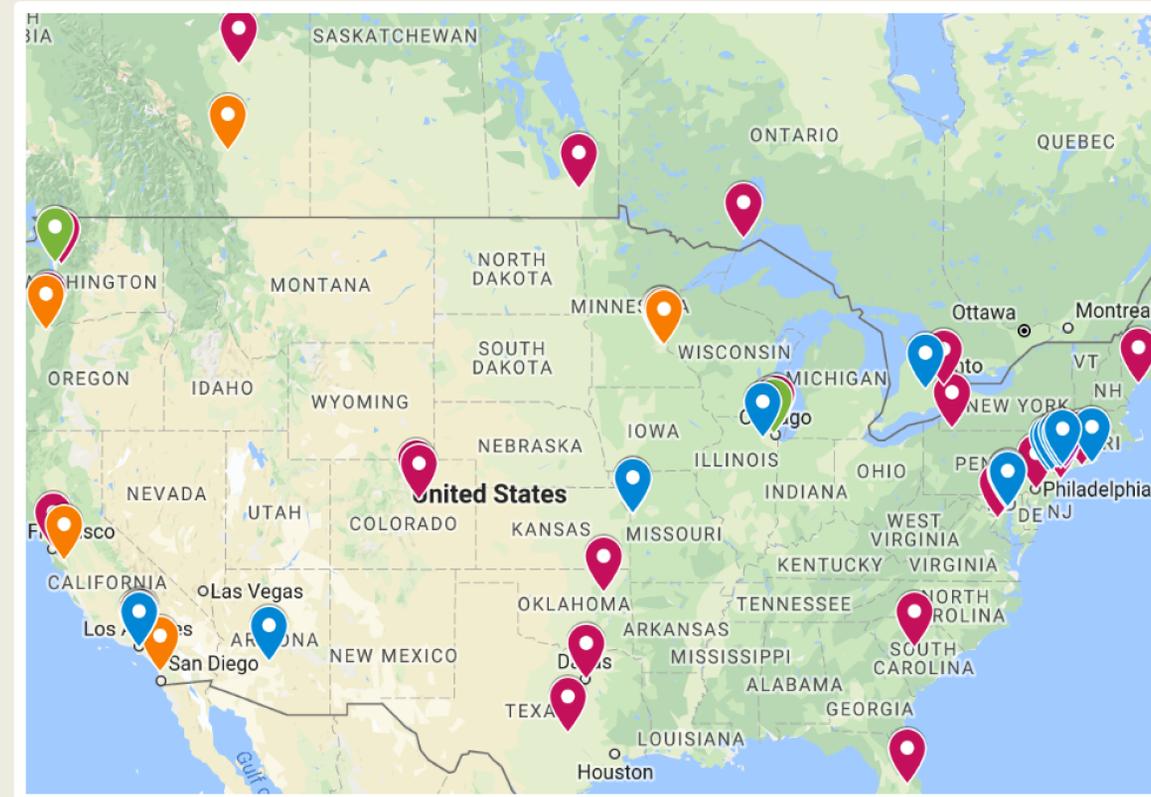
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MSW INTERNS at PUBLIC LIBRARIES: FOSTERING COLLABORATION FOR CHANGE

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WHAT:

- ✧ While collaboration between professional social workers and public libraries is gaining traction and press, virtually no professional literature exists about MSW *student* interns at public libraries. Yet at least 16 collaborations are currently underway across North America.
- ✧ Over 40,000 MSW students are in field placements every year. Most are required to log approximately 750 hours per year “in the field.” There are 16,500 public libraries in the United States.
- ✧ As public libraries are a “third place” where many of our clients spend much of their time and depend on for services, collaborating with MSW students offers ripe opportunities to:
 - Strengthen outreach and expand programming
 - Streamline connections between patrons and relevant social services
 - Enhance professional development of librarians and MSW students to the ultimate benefit of patrons/clients.



Map source: Sara Zettervall at www.wholepersonlibrarianship.com

Sixteen MSW intern/public library collaborations include:

1. Park University & Kansas City Public Library (PL)
2. University of Maryland & Enoch Free (Baltimore) PL
3. University of Alaska-Anchorage & Anchorage PL
4. Monmouth University (NJ) and Long Branch Free PL
5. Rutgers New Brunswick (NJ) and Newark PL
6. New York University & New York Public Library
7. San Jose State University & San Jose Public Library
8. Cal State Los Angeles & LA Central PL
9. University of Texas-Austin & Georgetown PL

51 total partnerships, including:

- 25 Full-time Social Workers currently employed by public libraries

WHY LIBRARIES:

- “Meet clients where they are”: Many of our clients are already there!
- Shared professional values and ethics:
 - Privacy & confidentiality
 - Social justice & Ethical responsibility to society
 - Cultural awareness & Social diversity
 - Dignity and worth of the person & Self-determination / Intellectual freedom
- Current challenges include:
 - Homelessness & mental health
 - Opioid abuse
 - Literacy & ESL
 - Digital divide

STUDENT ASSIGNMENTS*:

- Conduct needs assessments of:
 - Library staff
 - Patrons
- Provide trainings to library staff:
 - Policies & procedures regarding patrons in need
 - Mandated reporting
- Enhance library macro and micro services & programs:
 - Host community agencies at monthly “fairs”
 - Organize *Coffee and Conversations* for homeless patrons
 - Address programming gaps (i.e., pre-teens)
 - Assist with E-government forms
 - Refer to local social service agencies
 - Create community resources handbook or online guides

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Ideal interns:
 - Macro / Advanced Generalist / Community Organizing focus
 - Trailblazers; flexible; creative
- Supervision
 - Contract with outside agencies (i.e., Dept. of Homeless Services), retired social workers, adjunct professors
- Appropriate assignments* to meet learning goals and competency standards
- Private work space for intern
- Restrictions on type of work students can do: i.e., clinical?