

## **Brooke Harrison**

### **Self Evaluation**

Interning with Marvel Entertainment this past summer was truly an incredible experience. It was especially exciting to work for such a well-known company, but also to learn more about the publishing industry. I remember searching for internship opportunities early spring 2017 (almost a year ago now!) and deciding to go for a Disney Professional Internship. I submitted multiple applications to Marvel, as these were the internships I was best qualified for (writing/editing work). When I received an interview request for the Print Production position with Marvel, I couldn't have been happier. Everything that followed – finding housing in New York City, booking flights, marking the first day of work on my calendar – seemed surreal.

Though Disney is a very large company, the Marvel office was much smaller than I anticipated, only one floor of a nondescript office building just one block from Rockefeller Center. The intimate, casual work environment was something I particularly enjoyed. On our side of the floor, there was high creative energy. Comics everywhere, and conversations about Marvel movies, characters, and art. I sat with a group of other “creative” interns (graphic design, editorial, advertising) at a row of computers appropriately dubbed “Intern Row.” We got to know each other really well and it was always interesting to hear more about their day-to-day tasks and to learn about their departments. My Print Production team consisted of three people – my supervisor Mara Pantano and two coworkers. After logging into the system at my computer each morning, I'd check in with Mara at her desk and she'd let me know what needed to be done. The Print Production department is responsible for quality checking all printed materials, including shipments of new comics and trades. We also distributed comics to all the editors. We'd receive new shipments (between 5-8 boxes of comics on average) almost every day.

My day-to-day tasks included unboxing the comics, sorting them, and flipping through them for print errors. There are 8 copies of each comic. From this original stack of 8, I'd set aside 2 of the “worst” (bent spine, discoloration, nicked pages, etc.) for the print production team. These were the comics I'd flip through to check for printing errors. The remaining 6 comics would be distributed to the editors. While quality checking the comics, I'd make note of all errors in a notebook and then type my reports to email to my supervisor. She taught me what to look for and how to write/structure these quality reports (listing page numbers and any errors for each comic). I learned the terminology for printing errors, for example, “rollover” which occurs when the color from one page “rolls over” to the next page, like a color bleed, and “show through” which is when a previous page peeks through gaps/space in the spine. Though I'd email my final reports to Mara, we'd often discuss any particularly noteworthy errors, and she would decide whether or not to contact the printer. After I'd finish writing my reports, I'd categorize the comics according to the editors who'd be receiving them. In the first few weeks of my internship, I needed Mara's help to identify each of the editors and to remember where their offices were located. It was sometimes difficult to put names to faces, especially in an office like Marvel's where editors were often in meetings or at one another's desks. Eventually, I was able to do this entirely on my own, and I learned the editors' names as well as the characters/comics they were responsible for. I enjoyed distributing comics because it gave me an opportunity to observe the editors at work, and sometimes to exchange a quick word with them.

When I wasn't writing reports for my supervisor, there was other work to be done, including assembling make-readies (unbound comic books which I put together myself and then distributed), alphabetizing or organizing trades, and shredding documents or make-readies. Working within the Print Production department, I recognized my strengths as having a keen eye for detail (a requirement for my particular position), a positive attitude (which my supervisor herself noted), and the ability to get things done (in a timely manner, and often without needing additional directions or supervision). As for my weaknesses, I felt overwhelmed in the beginning and sometimes nervous or anxious to ask questions if I didn't understand a task. This internship was also my first experience working a 9-5 job. I'd not previously worked for so many hours at a time. Some days were harder than others, but for the most part, the hours went by very quickly and I always enjoyed going into the office, working, and getting to know my fellow interns. Eventually, I learned that it is OK (encouraged, even!) to ask questions. I learned the importance of distinguishing between the times you need help and the times you can figure something out for yourself. I think this is critical, because it's an opportunity to demonstrate to your supervisor an ability to take initiative and think for yourself. I also learned how seriously Marvel takes security and confidentiality. Every intern attends a security meeting in which we're taught to be cautious of opening suspicious emails or posting to social media. In fact, we weren't allowed to take any photos in the office. I couldn't bring my personal laptop into the building. Each morning when I checked in, I was given a lanyard and a printed ID (name, department, supervisor's name), but I was required to turn it in at the end of the day.

As interns, we were given exciting opportunities to learn more about Marvel and the Disney company as a whole. We attended an intern luncheon with special guest speaker Sana Amanat. I couldn't believe my luck, because I'd been a fan of hers for some time, as she's the editor and co-creator of the comic series "Ms. Marvel" featuring new character Kamala Khan, a Muslim-American teenager living in Jersey City. The comic gained popularity quickly. Amanat talked about her early career with another comic company, her transition to Marvel, and how she's come into her current position as Director of Content & Character Development. The guest speaker for our last intern luncheon was Nick Lowe, just as impressive, an Executive Editor who works on many of the Spider Man comics. I loved listening to him describe Marvel's storytelling creed as "characters first," their emphasis on developing relatable, vulnerable characters. Lowe also discussed his job as Executive Editor, pairing writers with artists and overseeing all aspects of the comic-creation process.

Working at Marvel this summer taught me much about myself and about what I hope to do post-graduation. As an Editing, Writing, Media major, my passions include reading, writing, editing, designing, blogging, social media, etc. Companies like Marvel encapsulate all these things and more. To be a part of their team – if only for a brief time – made me feel as though I were contributing to something greater. Ultimately, I want to help put stories out into the world that make people feel something. Whether I'm working for a more traditional publishing house, writing/editing Young Adult novels, or creating comic books at Marvel, I want to use my skills in a work environment where I'm surrounded by creative people with similar passions and talents. And now, thanks to an inspiring summer internship with Marvel, I feel one step closer to that goal.

**TOTAL WORDS WRITTEN:** 10,627

*Written reports listing printing errors in comic books (10,627)*