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Name: Cat Mitchell

Department: English and Related Literature

Organisations: The York Press

Project Title: Making Local Papers Pay

About the Project

I took part in the Making Local Papers Pay project, which involved creating a business plan for local newspapers. We did a lot of research online and worked closely with York Press to investigate the reasons for the fall in profits for local papers in recent years and to come up with new, creative ideas for bringing in a larger readership and new sources of revenue.

What initially appealed to you about the project/placement?

I applied for the team volunteering project as I thought it’d be a great opportunity to do some volunteering and to do work outside of my degree. It was also a great chance to meet new people and learn new skills useful for employment. I specifically chose the Making Local Papers Pay project as I was interested in the mixture between journalism and business. Because I wasn’t sure what my future career plans were, I thought gaining experience in these two different areas would help me to pick out my specific interests.

Were there any surprises?

During the project, we were surprised to find that the relationship with York Press wasn’t going to be as integral to the project as we’d expected. We’d assumed that we’d be working closely with the Press and would also be actually carrying out the changes we came up with. However, this became a positive aspect of the project as it forced us to do research into a greater number of local papers to find our information and gave us a broader understanding of the state of local papers in general. Also, since we weren’t expected to implement our own ideas, we could be more creative and experimental in our suggestions and could also look into long term options.

What were the highlights of your project/placement?

I most enjoyed working with new people and learning more about the workings of local newspapers. I’d only previously written for papers and so gaining an insight into the business models and revenue sources behind them was fascinating.

Did the placement/project influence any future career plans, what’s next?

The project definitely opened my mind to different career routes I could take in the future. Although I had an interest in business, I’d never worked on an actual business plan before, so the project gave me a greater understanding of what a career in business might involve.

Top tips for new volunteers

I would definitely recommend taking part in a team volunteering project. It gives you skills outside of your degree, gives you an opportunity to do work for the community, and is a great chance to meet new people and have fun.

If you’re interested in getting involved with a project like Cat’s head to the York Students in Communities website to find out more

@UoYVolunteering / YorkStudentsInCommunities