

Conservation and Science, Media Conservation Intern

Position summary

The Art Institute of Chicago's Photography and Media Conservation department is excited to hire a McMullan Arts Leadership Intern to work in Media Conservation this summer.

Media Conservation is a specialized branch within Conservation and Science's Photography and Media Conservation department, dedicated to the preservation and conservation of time-based media artworks. These complex, technology-driven artworks encompass a diverse range of formats, including film, video, audio, software, performance, and various display elements, which may incorporate equipment or sculptural components. Unlike traditional art forms, time-based media (TBM) artworks depend on rapidly evolving technologies, posing unique challenges for their long-term preservation. The department employs specialized strategies for examination, analysis, conservation, installation, and storage, all tailored to the dynamic nature of media art. Through a combination of rigorous technical expertise and innovative problem-solving, media conservation ensures the continued accessibility and integrity of these works, safeguarding their cultural and historical significance for future generations.

The intern will have the opportunity to produce a blog post about their work. Because of the range of time-based media conservation tasks, the internship can be shaped to focus on the selected intern's personal research interests or supplement areas of inexperience.

The intern will join a museum-wide intern cohort and have access to a range of programs to support their development in addition to their placement in Media Conservation. Mentorship is provided throughout the experience and connections with an intern alumni network will be established.

Internship Outcomes:

The goal of the McMullan Arts Leadership internship program is to be part of a museum-wide effort to provide students the opportunity to gain experience, career awareness, networks, and skills that will position them to thrive as future art museum leaders.

This program specifically aims to support students who encounter economic challenges when considering a career in the arts.

Aligned with this goal, we aim to help shape a diverse group of leaders whose actions are informed by a wide range of perspectives, varying career paths, and values inspired by their own lived experiences.

In this position, the intern will have the opportunity to:

- Support the preservation and care of time-based media artworks through a combination of hands-on tasks and research-driven projects;
- Assist with acquisitions, installation planning and preparation, technical troubleshooting, and the assignment and cataloging of TBM components;
- Produce a blog post about their work;
- Develop strong communication and organizational skills;

- Develop mentor relationships with field practitioners;
- Build peer-to-peer relationships with fellow interns.

Responsibilities

With guidance from the position's mentor, the intern will:

- Complete documentation for time-based media components;
- Assist with research and documentation related to time-based media artworks, collections, and media formats;
- Support general TBM conservation activities, including acquisitions, installation planning and preparation, and the assignment and cataloging of TBM components;
- Attend weekly check-ins with the position's mentor: Assistant Conservator of Media;
- Attend intern cohort professional development programs and museum practice seminars.

Qualifications

- Familiarity with electronics, coding, film, and/or video technologies.
- Ability to be open-minded and work collaboratively with colleagues across the museum.
- Preference will be given to students enrolled in — or with the intention of applying to — conservation or moving-image preservation programs.

APPLICATION:

You must upload all of the requested materials below (résumé, essay responses, and hyperlink to a digital portfolio OR writing sample) into only ONE pdf document and list your last name and “Summer 2026” in the title of the file (example: [LAST NAME]_SUMMER2026.pdf.) and include the title of the internship opportunity. Please upload your materials where asked in the online application.

A Digital Portfolio or writing sample is requested: The digital portfolio, website, or Google Drive folder must be presented as an accessible hyperlink listed in your resume. If you opt for a writing sample, that must be included in your application materials.

PLEASE NOTE: You will not be considered if any requested application element is missing.

To apply for this internship, tell us your story. We want to understand who you are, what motivates you and how you think. Please submit the following materials:

1. Résumé
2. Instead of a traditional cover letter, please respond to the following questions in short essays (no more than 300 words per answer.) We encourage you to provide specific examples to support your answers or to illustrate your ideas:
 - a. What is it about this job description that interests you the most?

- b. With the mission of the McMullan Arts Leadership intern program in mind, what perspectives might you bring to this role that you think museums need more of?
 - c. How do you envision this opportunity helping you towards your professional goals?
- 3. Choose one **or** the other:
 - a. Digital Portfolio: include an accessible hyperlink to a digital portfolio showing an example of a treatment or mockup of a time-based media artwork component.
 - b. Writing Sample: Include a short (~1000 words) writing sample about a TBM treatment, condition report, or media research.

Note: The internship will occur fully onsite. Due to onsite necessity, applicants based or attending school in the Chicagoland area during the internship timeframe will be prioritized. Internet access and appropriate technology will be necessary to complete this internship, but technological accommodations will be provided by the Art Institute of Chicago.