I would like to share a few of the things I have learned in my first few months with the Museum Studies Program here at KU...

- We have amazing students. Students are engaged in research on a wide range of topics, and have contributed to programs from exhibits to conservation. In organized internships, informal gatherings, and through their own initiative, students are making a difference in museums. Some students have given papers at the Kansas Museums Association and the Mountain-Plains Museum Association, while others have organized fund raising activities for our local museums.

- The faculty are tremendous. Whether from Lawrence, Topeka, or Kansas City, we have the great gift of being surrounded by excellent professionals who are willing to accept responsibility for organizing a class and sharing their knowledge with the next generation of museum leaders.

- There are faculty across campus whose research and teaching has much to offer Museum Studies. It turns out that people in fields as diverse as Film and Media Studies, Public Administration, Visual Art Education, Classics, Geography, and Theater — as well as Design, Education, History, Anthropology, Sociology, Psychology, Journalism, and Natural Sciences — have interests in common with those of museum studies students, and can serve as an expanded resource for our program.

- We have access to a rich variety of local cultural resources. On campus alone, students have access to over a dozen museums and collection facilities, while nearby there are opportunities such as the Watkins Community Museum, the Lawrence Arts Center, and the Lawrence Arts Roundtable.

- Kansas Museums are eager to collaborate with the program. Further afield, we have many wonderful alumni who are leading museums in the region, and we are exploring ways to help museum professionals continue to develop skills and knowledge throughout their careers.

In the midst of this wealth of opportunity, we are making substantial progress to reshape the Museum Studies Program here at KU. Our overriding goal is to create a program that prepares students at all levels to enter the museum profession ready to be actively engaged — and at the forefront — when museums encounter the inevitable changes of the future. Some of the steps we have taken so far include...

- Proposing a new Graduate Certificate in Museum Studies. This initiative is aimed at attracting students who want to develop skills and expertise in museum studies while pursuing a graduate degree in another discipline.

- Convening a Museum Studies Planning Committee. This large and diverse group — in which faculty advisors, teaching faculty, students, and alumni are represented — has been considering various proposals to revise the Museum Studies Master’s Program. Our goal is to have a new set of requirements in place for Fall 2013. Our framework supports three fundamental components — Foundational courses and experiences, Conceptual inquiry and application, and Professional specialization and expertise. Students who earn the MA in Museum Studies will demonstrate mastery of the professional and conceptual dimensions of museums in the broadest sense, while also developing the specialized skills necessary for success in the field.

These past four months have seemed like a whirlwind at times, as I have tried to get familiar with the campus, the town, and the region. I am so pleased, gratified, and appreciative of all the support that the program has received — from unexpected as well as usual sources. I have every confidence that we are poised to make some substantial headway in developing an extraordinary Museum Studies program.
Muse Students Take Internships Abroad

Anna Paradis at the Deutsches Museum of Science and Technology

My experience as an intern at the Deutsches Museum of Science & Technology (DM) in collaboration with the Rachel Carson Center for Environment & Society (RCC) in Munich, Germany started with a day trip to Deggenendorf. I was able to meet many of the Carson Fellows, researchers, students, and staff involved in topics related to the Anthropocene. I was very much welcomed and invited into this community of researchers and museum professionals as an equal. My opinions were sought out and I was invited on many occasions to participate in the weekly presentations, dinners, and outings along with the fellows and professional staff. I was kept very busy, as Munich is an exciting city with endless amounts of culture and history.

The DM is a museum in transition, as they are preparing for a large number of improvements to the building, the collection and exhibition spaces. Having toured most of the museum during my stay, I was in awe of the vast collection on exhibit and the staff involved at the museum. I was treated as a museum professional throughout my stay and have been invited to discuss my experiences freely including the issues and ideas surrounding the Anthropocene exhibit.

This freedom gave me a strong understanding of how exhibition research and collaborations are made and the role of each member on the team. Although I was not able to attend any of the exhibition planning meetings, which are all in German or located outside of Munich, I was kept well informed by Nina Möllers (the curator) on the planning and discussion that takes place. Having such a close relationship with the curator has also helped me to understand the inner workings of the museum. It has also given me insight into the role of the director and the influence on staff and visitors at the museum.

Because the DM is one of the most popular museums in Germany (possibly Europe) and because the audience is very stable, there is minimal effort made on the part of the administration to reach out to new visitors and broaden their audience. For example, when asked about improvements to the DM website, it was explained to me that the museum did not consider outreach/accessibility a priority because the current visitors expect the museum to stay the same (geared primarily towards scientists and the educated public). With this new exhibition, the museum staff involved and the RCC hope to build a new community of visitors looking for in-depth information and promoting new ideas. It may be more challenging, with limited support and funding available to bring about creative interactive displays, updated website activities, and community outreach that is required to make an impact on the general public and younger visitors for the Anthropocene exhibit.

As an intern I found the environment to be comfortable and productive, with many students, researchers, and staff willing to share their experiences and knowledge and who are excited to discuss the exhibit and my progress. I only hope that I can return to see the final project completed and the exhibit open with positive interactions and responses from the community. The Anthropocene is a controversial topic to cover, and that has made this experience all the more important to my museum education, as it has taught me that research and understanding of community needs must be taken into account for the success of the exhibit and the reputation of the museum. I feel so fortunate to have taken part in this experience and I will be forever enlightened because of it.
Peru’s tourism bureau uses the slogan “Land of the Incas!” and its promotional videos are dominated by images of the Andes Mountains. The most frequent question asked about my trip last summer to Peru has been, “Did you see Machu Picchu?” I shake my head and reply, “No, unfortunately I did not.” The Inca and Andes Mountains reflect only one aspect of Peru’s diverse culture, history, and environment. I spent three weeks in Peru, working at the Regional Museum of the National University of San Martin in Tarapoto, Peru. Tarapoto is located in the Upper Amazon Region of Peru. Tarapoto and the surrounding communities are composed of indigenous and migrant peoples. Issues of land ownership and resource rights have been a constant point of conflict between these communities, corporations, and the government. Through my museum studies and anthropology coursework, we have talked about the museum being a “contested space” in which different groups come together and discuss ideas of culture, race, identity, community, power, politics, nationalism, and citizenship. Nowhere is such a space needed more than in the Upper Amazon of Peru.

For these reasons, I traveled to Tarapoto with Dr. Bartholomew Dean, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Kansas (KU), and students participating in a summer field school through KU. Dr. Dean established a Department of Anthropology at the National University of San Martin, and was recently given administrative control over the Regional Museum. Dr. Dean conducted his field research with the Urarina people of the Upper Amazon, and donated a large collection of objects to KU, now part of the Spencer Museum of Art’s ethnographic collections. Last year, I worked with these objects while interning with the Spencer’s Arts & Cultures Department. Because the Spencer possesses one of the few systematic collections of Urarina material culture, I proposed traveling to Peru to explore potential areas for collaboration between the Spencer, the Regional Museum, and the KU Anthropology Department. However, before any collaboration could begin, I first needed to conduct a conservation assessment. This project was sponsored by the United States Embassy Museum Internship Program and the KU Anthropology Department. My internship was the first to be sponsored by the US Embassy to work with an Upper Amazon museum. The conservation assessment identifies environmental factors that cause damage to objects, including pests, light, humidity, temperature, water, pollutants, and security. All museums share these concerns, but they are especially problematic for museums which lack the funding and expertise to address them. Because of the seriousness of these conservation concerns, I recommended that the Regional Museum should focus on providing a stable environment for its collections before initiating collaborative projects.

My entire trip wasn’t spent in a basement museum working with infested artifacts. I went with the KU students on several excursions. I also spent a week in the Chachapoyas region of Peru, northwest of Tarapoto, touring archaeological sites of the Chachapoya culture. The Chachapoya were one of the last communities conquered by the Inca in the 15th Century before their fall to the Spanish. One site I toured was Kuelap, often referred to as the “Machu Picchu of the North”. Kuelap is a large fortress built high in the mountains by the Chachapoya people. It is less visited than Machu Picchu, not because it is unimpressive, but rather, because of the harrowing, three-hour drive, that snakes around single lane dirt roads up the side of mountains. While I did not get to see Machu Picchu, my stories and experiences about the other peoples and places of Peru do not disappoint those who ask.
The MPMA is a 10-state regional museum association. A few students and alums from the KU Muse program were able to attend its annual conference in 2012, with two presenting and receiving full scholarships to attend (Ben Miller and Sarah Adams). Ben Miller writes of his experience as a presenter and scholarship recipient:

At the Mountain-Plains Museum Association conference in Corpus Christi, I took part in the poster session with a display entitled, “Science Blogs: A Successful Model for Science Communication in Museums and Other Media.” My presentation highlighted the ways in which scientist bloggers have formed lively learning communities online and how museums can emulate this in their physical exhibits.

Poster sessions are a bit different from standard presentations in that there are many speakers in the room at once. Audience members mill about the room and talk to the speakers who interest them. A poster presenter has to give a quick introductory spiel to individuals or small groups that stop by, and then be prepared to discuss the aspects of their poster that interest the current viewer. In this way, the presentation becomes a dialogue, and the speaker gets a great deal of feedback.

I designed my poster to look like the posters I have seen at science conferences: highly technical, and heavy on text and graphs. Unfortunately, this ended up looking somewhat out of place at the museum conference. Most of the other posters on display were flashy, full of images and covered the speakers’ practical accomplishments rather than theoretical ideas. If I could do it over, I would remake my poster to better match the expectations of the museum audience, which turned out to be notably different from a group of pure academics. Still, the poster session was a rewarding experience and I would absolutely recommend it to other museum students looking to introduce themselves and their ideas to the rest of the field.

Ben Miller is a second year Muse student with a focus in Geology. He has interned at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in Washington D.C., Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park in Royal, Neb., and the Spencer Research Library at KU.

Kansas Museums Association Annual Conference
Newton, Kansas, October 24-26, 2012

Many students and alumni gave presentations at the Kansas Museums Association Annual Conference on variety of topics, such as collections, interpretation/education, technology, and directors/board of directors.

Multiple KU Muse attendees were scholarship recipients with free full admittance to the three-day conference.
This October, the KCAA held their Fall Symposium at the Kansas City Toy & Miniature Museum. The Symposium was planned by KU Muse alumna Kristine Schenk, the Education Chair for KCAA (since 2011). Assisting her were current Muse students Alexis Fekete, current president of KU’s Museum Student Organization (*’13), and KeAnne Langford, who will graduate from the program this December (*’12).

This year’s topic was “Taming the Object Nightmare: Introduction to Object Care.” Speakers were Paul Goudy, discussing textiles, Whitney Baker (Head of Conservation Services for KU Libraries who teaches MUSE 706 at KU), who spoke on the best ways to care for plastic objects, and Patricia Van Witt, detailing information on framed objects.

The Symposium was preceded by a special behind-the-scenes tour of the Toy and Miniature Museum, which boasts the largest collection of nostalgic toys, miniatures, and marbles in the Midwest. Because of its extensive collections, the museum will be changing their name in the near future to the National Toy and Miniature Museum.

The Kansas City Emerging Museum Professionals group was formed over the summer by a group of Kansas City EMP’s, headed by Amy Duke, who has just started a new job at the Spencer Museum of Art in late November of this year and previously worked for the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas City.

So, what exactly is an emerging museum professional? According to the American Alliance of Museums, EMP’s share a set of certain qualities: they have been in the museum profession less than ten years, are interested in networking with peers in similar career stages, are interested in career development workshops and activities, and have a need for additional resources to guide their career paths.

The mission of the KCEMP is to provide opportunities to socialize, network, and continue professional development. They are a group to support and share opportunities with emerging museum professionals and are in the process of being officially recognized by the American Alliance of Museums. The group meets about once a month to host a variety of events. Thus far they have organized two events for EMP’s around the Kansas City area, the first at the Kansas City Toy and Miniature Museum and the latter hosted by KU Muse students at the Spencer Museum of Art on KU’s main campus. Their third event will be held on Dec. 14 at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, and will be part of the Young Friends of Art Happy Hour program hosted by the museum.

If you are interested in attending the next event, joining the group, or would like more information, visit the group’s Facebook page at facebook.com/kansascityemp or email kcempgroup@gmail.com.
Museum Student Organization Activities

New Student Orientation - “A Whirlwind Tour of Lawrence’s Museums”

On Aug. 15 and 16, the Museum Student Organization (MSO) officers put together an orientation for incoming students to the Muse program. The schedule included talks and tours of six area museums. At orientation, students were able to meet with local museum professionals, as well as learn about current students’ experiences with KU and local museums through their internships.

On the 15th, students visited three locations on the main campus of KU. The first was the Kenneth Spencer Research Library, where they were given a brief introduction and tour by Kathy Lafferty of Public Services. Next, they were ushered to the KU Natural History Museum, where they went behind the scenes to hear from Andrew Campbell, collection manager of herpetology, about some of the techniques for storing collections. Finally, the students ended the day at the Spencer Museum of Art, where Sofia Galarza Liu, the collection manager, discussed her role at the museum and also touched on the recent issue of the flooding of the Art and Architecture Library in the ground floor of the museum.

On the 16th, Muse students visited both West Campus and Massachusetts Street. The first stop was at McGregor Herbarium, where Caleb Morse, collection manager of botany, gave a brief tour and elaborated on storage procedures for specimens of plant material. After that, students made the short trip to the Dole Institute of Politics, where they were given a behind-the-scenes tour of the archives by Kristine Schenk, Education and Interpretation Specialist. The tour concluded at the Watkins Community Museum of History on Massachusetts Street. Steve Nowak, the director, gave a tour of the museum and collections storage, and discussed the history of the museum, as well as issues encountered over the Watkins building’s time as a museum.

MSO would like to thank all of the professionals that made this tour possible and for taking time out of their busy schedules to accommodate the group.

Fall Trip to Hutchinson

For the MSO’s fall trip on Nov. 10, the group took a day trip to Hutchinson, Kansas to visit both the Kansas Underground Salt Museum and the Kansas Cosmosphere and Space Center.

At the Salt Museum, students and other guests were able to meet with Jamin Landavazo, a KU Muse alumni and Chief Curator at the museum. The group was able to take a tour with her through the museum, receiving details about exhibit design, working with other organizations, and general information about the museum pertinent to museologists.

At the Cosmosphere, the MSO was able to attend three programs (Dr. Goddard’s Lab, Planetarium, Digital Dome Theatre) and tour the museum. The ride home was beneficial, as the group was able to discuss their experience critically (that is, before letting loose with song for the latter part of the ride). Special thanks to Larry Brow, KU Muse alumni, for providing transportation for many attendees.

MSO Officers 2012-2013

Alexis Fekete  
President

Sarah Adams  
Vice President

Katie Sparks  
Treasurer

Alumni Across the Country

Museum Studies alumni are now working at museums in 29 states and Taiwan and Germany.

Are you a graduate of the Museum Studies program? We want to hear from you! Update your contact information and send your story to us at museumstudies@ku.edu.
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About the Museum Studies Program
The Museum Studies Program (MUSE) at the University of Kansas produces well-rounded graduates who are prepared for challenging careers in museums, historical agencies, and similar institutions. Drawing on the expertise of outstanding faculty in participating departments (American Studies, Anthropology, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Geology, and History), the skills of accomplished area museum professionals, and the rich resources of museums at KU and in nearby communities, the Museum Studies Program enables its students to develop advanced mastery of both an academic discipline and the issues and practices central to museums. With the rigorous interdisciplinary training provided by the Museum Studies Program, our graduates can flourish as life-long learners and leaders in the museum field.

Support Museum Studies
Please support the Museum Studies Program! We appreciate the tremendous amount of assistance you have given us in the past, but we still need your help!

By giving to Museum Studies, you will be contributing to the continued success of the program and assisting future graduates by providing them with opportunities to participate in activities that enrich their experience. Visit KUEndowment.org to give your gift today.