Dr. C. Riley Auge is the curator for the UM Anthropological Curation Facility (UMACF) here on the University of Montana campus. “Interning with UMACF provides students with a valuable and marketable skill set for both archaeological and museum careers or as a stepping stone for acceptance into graduate programs in these areas.”

What is the UM Anthropological Curation Facility?

“The UM Anthropological Curation Facility (UMACF) functions primarily as a repository and research facility housing ethnographic and archaeological collections along with archival records from across Montana and the Great Plains. It is a public facility dedicated to preserving and protecting Montana’s anthropological history. Daily work includes rehousing collections to federal standards; registering and accessioning collections; sorting and housing archival records; researching the history of collections; creating outreach programs; and managing federal, state, and tribal collections.”

Tell us more about your background and how you became the head curator at the facility.

“Before undertaking my doctoral studies, I earned a Master’s degree in Folklore with an emphasis on material culture studies that included training in museum work. While pursuing my doctorate, I took every opportunity to do internships in the historical archaeology lab and the UMACF doing artifact analysis, processing, photographing, and cataloging. In addition, I already had several years of teaching experience, which is essential for the effective design and supervision of a valuable internship program. This accumulated training and institutional knowledge of the UMACF and its collections eventually qualified me for the curator position that opened up at the UMACF in October of 2014.”

How do interns help with the work at the facility?

“The UMACF houses approximately one million objects that require cataloging, care, and research. The scope and intensity of this work requires multiple employees and could not be undertaken without the assistance of student interns. Interns have been an integral part of the UMACF for six years.”

“Students primarily work in the curation facility, which is a storage and research repository for ethnographic, archaeological, and archival materials. The various tasks of
caring for artifacts require great attention to detail, safety, confidentiality, and cultural respect. There are generally 2-4 interns working in the facility at any given time, usually on different tasks, but occasionally working in teams on special projects.”

“Beyond working with artifactual and archival materials, interns may also be assigned research projects on particular objects or collections or be engaged in educational outreach programs.”

**What are the time commitments for interns?**

“Student interns have the option of working 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, or 18 hours per week (1-6 credits) with flexible scheduling.”

**What, in your opinion, are some of the more interesting items in the collection?**

“We have numerous rare and interesting items from both prehistoric and historic periods in the archaeological and ethnographic collections, including the only known rock art paintbrush; a very rare 19th century glass egg; Mesoamerican ritual terracotta figurines; Chinese ceramics; and virtually every type of lithic and ground stone tool. These are just a few of the thousands of objects in the UMACF’s care.

**Are there opportunities for students to do research on the collections of an undergraduate/graduate research project?**

“Most of our collections are available for either undergraduates or graduates to use for research projects or thesis/dissertation research. There are certain protocols that must be followed to insure the safety and proper handling of the collections and dissemination of information, but the primary purpose of any collection is its ongoing educational potential.”

**When and how do you advertise for interns? How many do you generally have at a time?**

“The UMACF keeps flyers posted year round throughout the Anthropology department and on our webpage explaining our internship opportunities. We generally accept 8 – 10 interns per semester.”

**Are you looking for students from specific majors, years in school, or with specific qualifications?**

“We accept students from all disciplines and years in school with or without prior museum or collections experience; however, priority is given to upper classmen anthropology majors.”

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Courtney Little Axe working on an archival program.
Would you recommend interns to other employers?

“I wholeheartedly recommend interns to other employers. After students have interned in the UMACF, I often get requests from them to provide recommendations for other internship or employment opportunities they have found. Their work at the UMACF is often one of their best endorsements. For employers who haven’t considered offering an internship program for their businesses, I would greatly encourage them to do so. Interns are usually hard working, enthusiastic, and an invaluable asset to whatever business or organization they are attached.”

Where can students go for more information?

hs.umt.edu/anthropology/umacf/internships.php