I've thoroughly enjoyed my time as supervisor of this year's VLAA summer law student internship program, particularly as we've all managed to overcome certain restrictions associated with the Coronavirus. The pros have included working with more students than usual, all of high caliber, from around the country this time and not just the St. Louis area, albeit virtually. This summer's projects have also been more varied in nature; besides the usual individual writing of pertinent blog articles there has been the drafting of legal papers on different subjects and the team creation and/or modification of sample agreements for use by VLAA clients and attorneys, both with the help of outside attorney/mentors. In addition, there was the team orchestration of a multi-part copyright fair use webinar, some quick research and advice in connection with possible changes to the City of St. Louis ordinances relating to graffiti and murals in the aftermath of recent social justice protests and team assistance with a VLAA client referral relating to copyright infringement. The only real con may have been the inability to have in-person contact so far with and between the students, but that's par for the course these days...and it probably wouldn't have worked with our more physically-distant interns anyway.
Meet the Interns

Lucy Soyinka
Memphis, TN
Washington University School of Law

Nan Shen
St. Louis, MO
St. Louis University School of Law

Conlan Wilson
Washington, D.C.
The George Washington University Law School

Parham Golestianian
San Francisco, CA
Penn State Law

Sabrina Siddiqui
Newark, NJ
Rutgers Law School

Alec Williams
Washington, D.C.
Georgetown University Law Center

Elaine Kim
St. Louis, MO
Washington University in St. Louis

Spenser Jaenichen
Goshen, IN
University of Illinois College of Law

Collin McCabe
St. Louis, MO
St. Louis University School of Law

Jonnae Miller
Baton Rouge, LA
Southern University Law Center
Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the VLAA’s summer 2020 internship program was hosted entirely virtually. The program’s leaders utilized digital tools and software like Zoom and Google Drive to create an internship experience that encouraged leadership, facilitated teamwork, and fostered personal growth.

Interns met once a week through Zoom to discuss blog post ideas, sample contracts, client cases, and other artist-related legal news. Outside of weekly meetings, smaller groups of interns worked together on Zoom to create and amend agreements and prepare a Google Slides presentation to serve as a legal seminar.
The virtual internship has certainly been interesting. As an extrovert, I thrive off the little conversations that regularly happen at a normal workplace. However, **had things not been virtual, I would not have had the opportunity to work with the art/entertainment law community in St. Louis.** Hence, while this has certainly been a dramatic departure from anything I have done for prior internships, there are many **silver linings for which I’m thankful.**

- Alec Williams, Georgetown University Law Center

With everything happening in our world right now, it was really interesting to hear people from across the country and what they were experiencing. I feel as though it brought a **unique perspective** to the group; something that likely doesn't occur most years.

- Spenser Jaenichen, University of Illinois School of Law
Working with Professionals
preparing legal writing samples

With the mentorship of law professors and lawyers from both the St. Louis area and other parts of the country, interns prepared writing samples (memos, contracts, briefs, etc.) relating to intellectual property and tax law.

Interns Nan Shen, Collin McCabe, and Alec Williams worked with lawyer David Kim of Stinson LLP (Kansas City, MO) and Rochelle Skolnick from the American Federation of Musicians (New York, NY) to draft performance, collaboration and permission agreements that could be used by VLAA clients.

"We met through Zoom meetings and they offered insightful suggestions and tips. We really appreciated their contributions and their precious time. The on-line summer experience has been unique, and it allowed our team to collaborate with lawyers and professors not only from the St. Louis area but from all over the United States.

- Nan Shen, St. Louis University School of Law
Interns were provided with the opportunity to work with a VLAA client and gain hands-on experience in copyright and trademark law.

Students Lucy Soyinka, Nan Shen, Sabrina Siddiqui, and Alec Williams worked closely with supervising attorney Scott Miller on a copyright matter that a client brought to VLAA in hopes of resolving.

“I and my fellow interns have been able to tackle different issues related to our client's specific legal problem, and we have all been able to communicate and work closely together. [...] Our process for doing research and communicating with our client has been well-organized, thoughtful, and strategic. Our client has been a pleasure to work with, and it feels great to have expert guidance and be able to use my legal knowledge to apply in the real world to help clients. Before VLAA, I had no practical experience in the Intellectual Property field of law. In fact, I've often been advised and have come to understand that opportunities to gain experience in IP law can be quite difficult to come by early in your legal career, and especially if you're a student, so I will certainly look back at this opportunity with as much gratitude as I had excitement when looking forward to it.”

- Sabrina Siddiqui, Rutgers Law School
The interns worked with program leader Scott Miller to write at least two articles on artist-related law topics of their choosing.

Final blog articles were published on the VLAA’s Law Student Blog: https://vlaa.org/category/law-student-blog/

Blog Article Examples

Politics, Presidents, and Playlists
By: Alec Williams

We Need to Talk about Unauthorized Trademark Use
By: Lucy Soyinka

How to File a DMCA Takedown Notice
By: Nan Shen

Rethinking the Museum “Public”
By: Elaine Kim

Social Influencers: Short and Simple Legal Considerations
By: Spencer Jaenichen

How Can Small Fashion Entrepreneurs Seek IP Protection?
By: Nan Shen
Final Reflections

closing statement and takeaways

Sue Greenberg  VLAA Executive Director

This was an unusual summer, of course. Pre-pandemic, our small group of St. Louis-based interns gathered weekly over coffee. Because we met on Zoom this year, we were able to include 11 students from both coasts (and in between) — value added for them and for us. The students worked hard. They learned about how the law relates to the unique issues raised in the arts and were introduced to pro bono service. So we’re proudly declaring 2020 a smashing success! Finally, we’re beyond grateful to Scott Miller, a retired attorney, who has run our program for several years. He’s a gem.


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The entire experience was significant because it helped me export my knowledge into practical blogs and legal tools for artists and the VLAA. Law school is a good venue for teaching knowledge but it seldom teaches students how to use those in daily life. The experience in VLAA helped me prepare for this journey and should be beneficial for my future legal career.

- Nan Shen, SLU Law

Prior to my internship with VLAA, I had little experience with music-based legal work. Now, nearing the end of my experience, I’ve researched complex copyright law disputes, edited sample performance agreements, and even worked with a client. It has been an incredibly impactful, diverse, and fulfilling opportunity. I hope to make music law a permanent fixture in my legal career.

- Alec Williams, Georgetown Law

“ I was able to learn more about copyright and trademark law issues specifically relevant to the arts community. I wrote blog articles about issues in copyright and trademark law that affect artists. I worked with fellow law students to create a webinar on fair use in film, visual arts, and poetry and I had the opportunity to work with a VLAA client. Interning with the VLAA reaffirmed my interest in intellectual property.

- Lucy Soyinka, WashU Law