

Interning at APM

Over the summer, I interned at Atlantic Public Media, a production company that founded and continues to create content for WCAI, the NPR station for Cape Cod and the Islands. My work was mostly focused on one project, Sonic IDs, which are approximately one-minute anecdotes from anyone around the South Shore. These stories don't have specific topics and can be funny, serious, or informational. I edited backlogged interviews from reporters around the station, such as an interview with a lobsterman discussing the economic issues he currently faces on the job. I turned this into two Sonic IDs in which he talked about when his uncle brought him into the profession at age 16 and how smart lobsters are based on their fighting behavior. I also created my own Sonics, learning to use a field microphone and recording equipment to interview members of the community I sought out. I went to the Mashpee Pow-wow and interviewed members of the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe about what their traditions and events mean to them. I talked to sailors about their craziest sailboat races. I spoke to food service workers and artists about why they love their jobs and the best parts of their days.

Certain aspects of working on Sonics, such as listening to tape over and over to decide how to cut things based on seemingly minor details and spending time watching YouTube tutorials to learn how to do a small editing task in unfamiliar software, were tedious but allowed me to learn much more about audio editing. I also enjoyed the freedom of working on Sonic IDs, which cover diverse topics and required me to speak with many different community members I never would have met otherwise. Furthermore, it was helpful to learn from Viki Merrick and Jay Allison, who have been working in public radio for decades, a field which has no clear career path. I learned to always be creating new content, how to think out of the box in how oral stories can be crafted, and how to interact with people in interviews to make them feel comfortable and get the best content—whether that's producing the best audio quality or asking the right questions to get the best stories. I had never worked in radio before, and I loved the intersection of journalism and storytelling production. I was able to shadow reporters and learn about important issues in the local community, but then turn them into something entertaining by connecting the listener to whomever we were speaking with. I felt a clear sense of how local radio can bring communities together, drawing on relatability and the need to spread information.

Going forward, I hope to apply to more jobs with NPR. I also hope to take courses in Art, Film, and Visual Studies that might be able to help me expand my abilities into visual storytelling and take courses in history on specific topics that I might be able to cover in future work.

--Margo Silliman, 2023 Harvard Club of Cape Cod Summer Fellow