

First Person Perspective – Bonnie Dingman

Major: Marketing

Location: Jerusalem, Israel

Dates and Length of Internship: Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) –July to August 2003; Profile Investment Service –September to November 2003

Did you receive academic credit (i.e. internship credit, practicum credit, independent study credit etc.) for your international internship (or volunteer/teaching experience) abroad?

No

Was your international internship (or volunteering/teaching) experience what you had anticipated? If not, how was it different from what you expected?

Yes, it was an incredible experience

How would you rate your overall experience (i.e. good, poor, great – Please describe)?

Great

What were your responsibilities as an international intern/teacher/volunteer?

At MEMRI, I helped with current research projects and some English translation. At Profile, I basically worked as an office receptionist/secretary. I verified trades of stocks, bonds and mutual funds. I opened accounts for clients and handled paper work and communication. I also handled specific problems with client accounts.

What problems did you encounter?

Language was an occasional problem when I would answer the phone and the person was a Hebrew speaker. Other than that the internships ran smoothly.

What were the highlights of your experience abroad?

The people I met were wonderful and very helpful to me in my stay. I loved getting to know the city and finding my way around. It was just such an incredible experience to stay in Jerusalem for five months. Even with the terrorism Israelis face daily, I never felt threatened or unsafe. It is almost too hard to describe the beauty of the Holy City.

Did you feel well prepared for your international experience? What could ODU do to better prepare you?

I felt prepared, but I also had American friends living in Israel, which was an advantage.

What were the main cultural differences you noticed between your host country and the United States?

Language, Security Guards everywhere-going into grocery stores, restaurants, anywhere bags were always checked, but for good reason.

Did you think the international experience was beneficial to you academically and personally? (Please explain)

Absolutely, my mind was greatly expanded in relation to international politics and also gave me an eyewitness to the problems faced by Israel. Personally, I grew very attached to Jerusalem and the culture. My own lifestyle was greatly affected and changed by living in Israel. It was an incredible experience. It is just good for one's own thinking to travel outside the USA and see there is life and different cultures thriving elsewhere.

Would you recommend an international internship/volunteer abroad opportunity to other students?

Yes