Architecture and Planning Library: Rare Materials Collection

Student/Volunteer Position Guide

Position Title:  
Collection Management – Inventory and rehousing, Dr Ernest Fooks Collection

Supervisor:  
Sarah Charing, Liaison Librarian – Research Support, Architecture, Building and Planning  
Jason Benjamin, Conservation Programs Coordinator, Cultural Collections  
Helen Arnoldi, Cultural Collections Projects Coordinator

Position Goal:  
The primary goal of this position will be to create a detailed inventory of the correspondence, principally relating to the publication of *X-Ray the City*, and a selection of public lecture notes and slides that are held in the Dr Ernest Fooks Collection which is part of the Rare Materials Collection in the Architecture and Planning Library. This will enable the collection to be digitised at a later date. It is also anticipated that this material may form the basis of future exhibitions and publications on Fooks and will aid in the long term access to and storage of this collection.

Background:  
The Rare Materials Collection in the Architecture and Planning Library comprises of 19th and 20th century material; seminal architectural texts; collections of major local architects and planners; original drawings, sketchbooks and scrapbooks; objects from the University's architectural atelier and theses. Pre-19th century material from the collection is housed with the Special Collections at the Baillieu Library.

Dr Ernest Fooks (1906—1985) was a prominent Viennese architect who came to Melbourne in 1939. He made a significant contribution to architecture, town planning, and design education in Australia and to the cultural life of Melbourne. He initially worked as a town planner with Housing Commission Victoria before establishing his own practice. In 1944 he was appointed the first lecturer in town planning at Melbourne Technical College (now the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology). Fooks was a contemporary of Robin Boyd and a key proponent of the International Modern Movement in Australian architecture. He is best known for his numerous residential projects especially around the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Some of his more well-known commercial projects from the 1950s include La Ronde jewellery shop in Collins Street and the Public Trustees Building in Exhibition Street. His personal correspondence and slides were gifted to the University by his wife, Noemi in the late 1980s, after his death in 1985. The University of Melbourne collection consists mostly of a vast number of slides, and the correspondence. There are complementary collections of Fooks’ work held at the RMIT Design Archive and The State Library of Victoria.
Responsibilities: Working in consultation with the Liaison Librarian, the primary focus of this project will be to sort and then catalogue the correspondence and a selection of slides relating to international exhibitions, and vernacular architecture in the Dr Ernest Fooks Collection. A secondary part of this project will be to rehouse a selection of materials from the collection to meet conservation standards. This will involve assessing the condition of the collection materials and then rehousing in archival folders, jackets, boxes and other appropriate enclosures. Once rehoused, labels will need to be created identifying the contents of each folder and inventory lists created.

Qualifications: A basic understanding of collection management principles specific to the documentation of museum objects (progress towards the completion of a degree in Curatorial/Museum Studies and/or previous volunteer experience with an Archive, Museum or Historical Society is desirable).

Knowledge of the correct procedures for the safe handling of objects would be advantageous as this position requires the handling and close inspection of vulnerable works on paper and other collection items.

An interest in architectural history would be ideal.

An interest in / knowledge of conservation methods and practices.

A methodical, prudent approach with a keen eye for detail is required.

Training and Supervision: On-the-job training specific to the requirements of the position will be given.

Occasional meetings with the Cultural Collections Projects Coordinator to review how the project is progressing and discuss any ideas or problems encountered.

Benefits: Opportunity to work at close hand with one of the University of Melbourne’s extensive cultural collections.

The opportunity for professional development through experience gained in collection management procedures and practice.

Satisfaction gained from working closely with the Architecture and Planning Library’s Rare Materials Collection. Through the project, you will be contributing to make the University’s cultural collections more accessible, facilitating their interpretation and assisting in their long term preservation.

For more information on this position please contact:
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