Position Title: Collection Management - Cataloguing and Re-housing, Comparative Anatomy Collection

Supervisor: Dr Ryan Jefferies, Curator, HBA Museum
Helen Arnoldi, Cultural Collections Projects Coordinator

Position Goal: The primary goal of this position will be to catalogue and create database records for a large collection of zoology specimens and comparative anatomy models that date from the early 20th century. Individual items will also need to be rehoused in archival storage boxes. Records generated on the collection will go onto Vernon, the Museum’s electronic database and it is anticipated that this material will be used in a future exhibition on comparative anatomy and evolution.

Background: The Harry Brookes Allen Museum of Anatomy and Pathology has one of the largest collections of anatomical and pathological specimens and teaching models in Australia and serves as an educational facility for students studying medicine and related science disciplines. A majority of the 12,000 objects within the collection are dissected human remains (organs, systems or regions), some of which date back to the time of Sir Harry Brookes Allen (June 1854 – March 1926). Most of the museum is arranged according to anatomical regions and systems of the human body, with corresponding pathologies. The Harry Brookes Allen Museum’s collection also includes a significant collection of historical plaster, papier-mâché and wax anatomical models imported from Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries, historical death masks and a wax dermatological moulage collection.

The Comparative Anatomy Collection comprises more than 100 zoology specimens and comparative anatomy models that have recently been identified in the HBA Museum collections. These include marsupial and primate specimens, plaster casts of early hominin fossils and skeletal preparations, which were used for teaching in the early 20th century. While some of the collection has been attributed to the anatomy professor, Frederic Wood Jones, further research is necessary to determine the provenance of the remaining specimens and objects.

Responsibilities: Under the guidance of the Curator, the student/volunteer will be required to create an inventory of the collection. Once completed, the objects will need to be catalogued and have an individual database record created for them. This information will then be incorporated into Vernon, the museum’s electronic database. Once catalogued, the zoology specimens and anatomy models will need to be rehoused in improved archival storage boxes.
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 museum objects is desirable as this position will require the close inspection of the vulnerable zoology specimens and comparative anatomy models.

A methodical, prudent approach and a keen eye for detail.

A science background and an interest in medical history would be ideal.

Training and Supervision:

On-the-job training specific to the task of this position will be provided.

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 the application of collection management procedures and practices to the Comparative Anatomy 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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