Harry Brookes Allen Museum of Anatomy and Pathology

Student/Volunteer Position Guide

Position Title: Collection Management – Inventory and Research Project, Embryonic development models

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

Position Goal: The primary goal of this position will be to create an inventory and research the origins of a small collection of historical embryonic models about which little is currently known. The completed research will increase our understanding and appreciation of the models and be used in the development of a new display featuring human developmental anatomy.

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.

This small collection of ten embryonic development models date from the early 20th century and were made from a range of materials, including plaster and wood. Most of these models were manufactured by the company Jewell Biology Models, Chicago. An additional set were made ‘in-house’ at the University.

Responsibilities: In consultation with the Curator, the student/volunteer will investigate the history of this collection of embryonic development models. The first stage of this project will require the student to complete an inventory of the historic models. Once the inventory is complete, research into the origins of the embryonic models will be required utilising the archival documents at the University of Melbourne Archives and other resources. This completed research will then be drawn on to provide content for a new display within the HBA Museum that will explore human developmental anatomy. If interested, there may also be the opportunity to develop this research into an article for future publication.
Qualifications: The student/volunteer will need to have sound research skills and be competent in use of the library and its catalogues.

Knowledge of the correct procedures for the safe handling of museum objects is desirable as this position will require the close inspection of these vulnerable objects.

Good communication skills are needed including research writing and interactions with research contacts. Ability to work independently on research leads.

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 in researching this unique collection of historic embryonic models in the Museum’s collections and generating new knowledge and information that will be utilised in their future interpretation and display. In depth research into the University’s cultural collections is necessary to enhance our long term understanding, management and appreciation of the collections.

For more information on this position please contact:
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