The University of Melbourne Herbarium
Student/Volunteer Position Guide

Position Title: Preventative Conservation and Documentation project - Burnley Herbarium Collection

Supervisor: Dr Gillian Brown, Herbarium Curator, University of Melbourne Herbarium
Helen Arnoldi, Cultural Collections Projects Coordinator

Background: The Burnley Herbarium Collection comprises of approximately 3000 specimens and was donated to the University of Melbourne Herbarium in 2007. The collection has come from the University’s Burnley campus, located at the Burnley Gardens which date back to 1861, when the Horticulture Society of Victoria established experimental gardens on the site.

Position Goal: The goal of this position is to ensure that specimens in the Burnley Herbarium Vascular Plant Collection undergo basic preventative conservation practices and are documented on the database. The conservation re-housing and documentation of specimens within the collection will ensure that information on the collection is current, complete and all specimens are housed to conservation standards.

Responsibilities: The student/volunteer will be responsible for the re-housing of specimens from a range of plant families by the remounting of specimens onto archival card. As part of this process it will be necessary to document the extent of any pest damage. Information on individual specimens will also need to be recorded onto the MELU catalogue database. It will also be necessary to check that specimen names are current, print new labels and then maintain provenance by keeping all labels, annotation slips etc that originally came with each specimen for future reference. Due to the size of the collection (c. 3000 specimen) this project will be broken up into smaller, more manageable sections on which to focus.

Qualifications: Knowledge of the correct procedures for the safe handling of museum objects is desirable as this position requires the close inspection of the botanical specimens.

Ideally the student/volunteer will have a basic understanding of collection management principles specific to the documentation of objects (progress towards the completion of a degree in Museum Studies/Conservation or similar would be suitable).

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

While no prior knowledge of plants is necessary, an interest in botany, horticulture, conservation and/or historical botanical collections would be ideal.
Training and Supervision: On-the-job training specific to the task 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 in focusing a specific collection and seeing it documented and rehoused to meet the museum and conservation standards. Through the project you will help make the Herbarium’s collections more accessible and contribute to the collection’s preservation, thus increasing our long term understanding, management and appreciation of this collection.

For more information on this position please contact:
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