Medical History Museum

Student/Volunteer Position Guide

Position Title: Collection Management – Relocation and Rehousing Project

Supervisor: Dr Jacqueline Healy, Curator
Helen Arnoldi, Cultural Collections Projects Coordinator

Position Goal: The primary goal of this position will be to assist in the relocation of sections of the Museum’s collections. The relocation and rehousing project will result in the movement of collection items into the compactus and the creation of object only stores. As part of this process, it will be necessary to repack some items and line shelves to ensure that collection items are stored to meet conservation standards. This project will aid in the long term access to, and storage of this collection.

Background: Since its opening in 1967, the Medical History Museum’s collection has grown substantially through the donation of documents, photographs, instruments, and records from medical graduates, families and institutions in and around Melbourne. Originally the collection mainly reflected the teaching of medicine at the University of Melbourne and its clinical schools, and the achievements of its graduates from the 1860s to the present day. However, the donation in 1971 of the 19th century Savory and Moore Pharmacy, through a further grant from the Wellcome Trust, and the 1994 acquisition of the Australian Medical Association collection, has seen the scope of the museum broadened to reflect the history of medical practice in Victoria, and more generally the development of Western medicine.

The purpose of the museum is to encourage appreciation and understanding of the history of medicine and its role in society. The museum stimulates active learning about the history of medicine through research, teaching, and dialogue among communities of students, faculty, scholars, alumni, and the wider public. Further information on the museum can be found at http://museum.medicine.unimelb.edu.au/

Responsibilities: Working in consultation with the Curator, the student/s will be required to assist in the various aspects of this relocation process. The first stage of the project will involve the planning for the move: the development of a plan for the proposed move including logistical issues such as timings, resources required and documentation needed. Objects will be moved into a compactus which will need to be properly prepared for the collection items and where appropriate, objects will need to be repacked to ensure safe transit and subsequent storage. Once relocated, new location details will be recorded ready for updating on the electronic catalogue. As part of the relocation process, clear procedures will be established which will outline the actions for the path of any item from delivery into the Museum through to incorporation into the collection. This project would be ideal for two students/volunteers working together in consultation with the Museum’s curator.
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, Conservation 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 artefacts.

An interest in collection management procedures and practices.

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

An interest in the history of medicine.

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 in working closely with the Medical History Museum’s significant holdings and seeing the storage of the collection improved to meet museum standards. Through this 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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