The School of Physics Museum

Student/Volunteer Position Guide

Position Title: Collections Management - Cataloguing Assistant

Supervisor: Phil Lyons, Collection Manager - School of Physics Museum
Helen Arnoldi, Student Projects Coordinator, Cultural Collections

Position Goal: Under direction, the student/volunteer will assist in the cataloguing and documentation of museum objects that are housed in the School of Physics Museum storage areas. The catalogue information will be incorporated within the museum’s database where it will be accessible to the public through the museum’s web site. http://www.ph.unimelb.edu.au/museum/

Background: The collection of The School of Physics Museum at the University of Melbourne comprises some 400 items of historical and scientific interest, concentrating on scientific apparatus constructed by former professors and staff for research purposes. It includes equipment and photographs spanning the history of the museum, which was established as the School of Natural Philosophy in the 1880s. There are significant holdings of ruling engines and diffraction gratings developed by H.J Grayson and Lyle in the School and the CSIRO as well as equipment used in the development of optical munitions during the Second World War. For more information on the Physics Museum’s collections visit their website at: http://www.ph.unimelb.edu.au/museum/

Responsibilities: In consultation with the collection manager, the student/volunteer will be required to catalogue a selection of objects from the collection. A manual catalogue worksheet for each item will need to be completed. As part of the cataloguing process, the object will be numbered and object details documented in fields such as description, inscriptions, history, storage location and condition. The project may also involve taking a digital image of each object that will subsequently be attached to the catalogue. In liaison with the collections manager and the Coordinator Conservation Programs, the student/volunteers will also assess the current storage of the objects and re-house them in suitable packaging/housing. This project may be undertaken by two students/volunteers working together in a team throughout the semester.

Qualifications: Ideally 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 knowledge of the correct procedures for the safe handling of museum objects is desirable as this position requires the handling and close inspection of these vulnerable items.

An interest in historic scientific apparatus and physics would be beneficial.
A methodical, prudent approach and a keen eye for detail.

Experience with museum databases would be desirable.

**Training and Supervision:**

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

Ongoing guidance from the Collection Manager on the direction of the project.

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 focusing on a selection of objects in the collection and seeing them documented and rehoused to meet museum and conservation standards. Through this project you will help make The School of Physics Museum collection more accessible. The application of collection management principles to 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:
Helen Arnoldi, Cultural Collections Projects Coordinator
Telephone: 8344 3103
Email harnoldi@unimelb.edu.au