University of Melbourne Archives

Student/Volunteer Position Guide

Position Title: Research Assistant – Somewhere in France, WW1 exhibition

Supervisor: Katie Wood, Archivist, Access and Outreach, UMA
Helen Arnoldi, Cultural Collections Projects Coordinator

Position Goal: The student/volunteer will provide research support to the Curator, Archives and Academic staff in the development of content and associated on-line resources for the exhibition Somewhere in France. The WW1 exhibition will open in the Noel Shaw Gallery, Baillieu Library in April 2016.

Background: The University of Melbourne Archives was established in 1960 and to date holds some 18 kilometres of records, making it one of the largest non-government collections in Australia. UMA collects, manages and provides access to the historical records of the University, Victorian business, trade unions and other labour organisations, community and cultural organisations, as well as the personal papers of many individuals prominent within them.

The exhibition Somewhere in France will draw upon the extensive records relating to World War 1 at UMA. The exhibition will focus on the experience of Australian soldiers on the Western Front and their impressions and relations with France and the French people. The exhibition follows from a successful project undertaken by French students which produced the online exhibition Somewhere in France. The official University records document the University’s involvement in the war, through research, mobilisations and public relations. Other collections of significance include that of Sir Percival Edgar Dean, (one of) Billy Hughes’ private secretary from November 1916, and the war diaries of John Neville Fraser, the father of Malcolm Fraser. The large collection of trade union records document the campaign against conscription in Australia. In relation to the experience of Australian soldiers in France, UMA holds an interesting range of documents. They include the diaries and correspondence of University students’ and staff, some of whom did not return. UMA also holds photographs, medals, publications and other memorabilia gathered by Australian soldiers during the war.

Responsibilities: Under the supervision of the Archivist, the student/volunteer will assist in the research and development of the exhibition Somewhere in France, an exhibition that will utilise WW1 materials held in UMA collections. As well as providing research support for the exhibition and contribution to the creation of the associated on-line resources, the student will have the opportunity to contribute to the curatorial decisions of the exhibition committee. The student will become familiar with the original World War One material held in the UMA collections and with a basic outline of the history of the Western Front and relations between the French and Australians.
Qualifications: The student will need to have a basic understanding of curatorship and collection management principles (progress towards the completion of a degree in Art Curatorship, Museum Studies or History would be ideal).

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

Good communication and sound research and writing skills are needed. The ability to read and write in French would be ideal, although not necessary.

The ability to work independently, and also in consultation with a small team.

An interest in WW1 and Australian history 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: 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 on a high profile exhibition and see the curatorial process in action from the planning and development stages through to exhibition design.

Professional development through experience gained in curatorial and collection management procedures and practice. This includes experience in researching for exhibition content, contribution to the creation of on-line resources and the handling of museum objects.

Good public exposure of the exhibition as it will be seen by many high profile visitors, students and members of the academic and general community.

For more information on this position please contact:
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