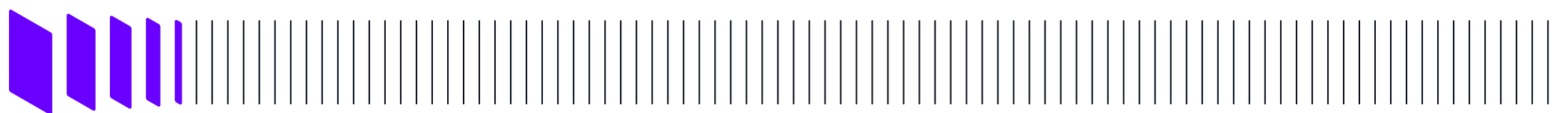
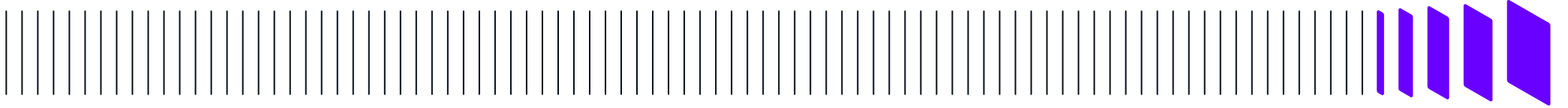


# Careers in Heritage

## How to kick start your career in the heritage sector



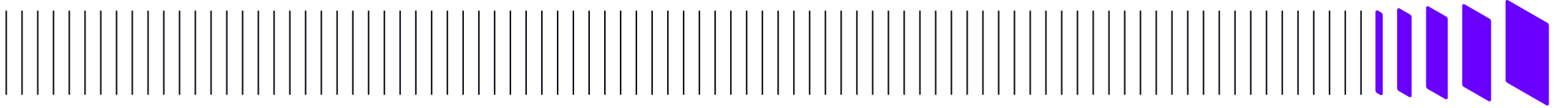


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## What is the heritage sector?

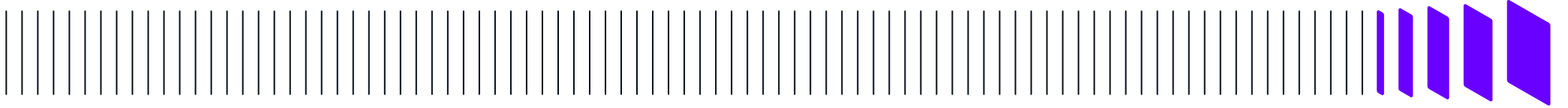
**Very broadly, the heritage sector covers roles in museums, working with archives, rare book collections, conservation, education, events, archaeology, historic buildings... The list could go on.** Within each of these areas, there are a number of different roles and specialisms, many of which require different training, skills and experience. Working in this sector can offer a rewarding and fascinating career.

National and local government bodies, professional associations and a broad range of specialist service providers and freelancers all support the extensive heritage sector. Average salary levels can be lower for heritage jobs compared with other sectors and competition for roles is often fierce in an increasingly popular field. These two factors combined mean that to build a successful career in the heritage sector, you will need a genuine love of what you do.

Enthusiasm for preserving history and heritage will be a key element but will not necessarily be enough to secure you the job. Most roles will require you to be educated to at least degree level, but you will need a large amount of relevant work experience too. Gaining knowledge of the sector through volunteering, work shadowing and/or via an internship is often the best way to give your CV the best chance of being noticed by potential employers.

Since the heritage sector covers such a range of careers, there are a wide diversity of places to look for opportunities. Current records suggest there are **over 2,500 museums, over 4000 public libraries and 950 academic libraries** in the UK. In 2009 there were **122 national, 654 local, 328 university, 1224 special and 61 business archive collections** listed in the UK, so there is no shortage of places to work!





## What qualifications do you need?

The majority of jobs in heritage require higher education qualifications. In theory, the subject you study is less important than the fact you have demonstrated a high level of academic commitment and ability. An undergraduate level degree is usually required, while a master's degree or doctorate is not. However, the more specialised the work you would like to pursue is, the more likely a specialised qualification is beneficial in the long term. University courses can offer the chance to try out different aspects of your chosen sector, perhaps taking part in both theoretical and hands-on modules.

### Work-based Qualifications

Instead of (or as well as) academic qualifications, you can also achieve work-based qualifications. While working in a heritage or museum role, even a part-time or seasonal one, you can work towards the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) in visitor services, which opens up your career horizons in museums and galleries. Museums Galleries Scotland also helps to support museums and galleries in running two types of modern apprenticeships – gaining work experience and heritage qualifications – in Digital Marketing and an apprentice Technician, these usually come about annually so it's worth keeping an eye out for!

### Further study

Unlike other sectors, there's not an annual graduate recruitment cycle for cultural work, and only a few graduate schemes.

Many people choose further study before embarking on their career, but this may not be the best route as experience can often outweigh a qualification. There are many within the sector stating that they're keen to give opportunities to those who haven't had a chance to complete a course of further study, so it's certainly not right for everyone.

When you're trying to decide whether or not further study is right for you, it may help to consider the following:

**Gain** some experience within the sector first, it might not be all you are expecting!

- E.g. Informal work experience, volunteering, internships or basic paid work.

**Clarify** your career ambitions – do you need further study for your career path?

- It's not unusual to work for a couple of years while you get to know the sector to prevent a misplaced investment.
- Some qualifications can be gained on the job or part-time study while working.

**Research** what courses are commonly sought in job listing.

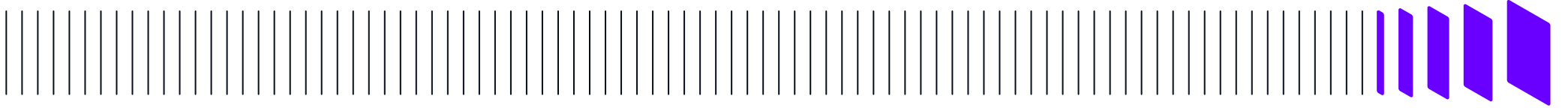
- Ask those currently doing the role which they specifically might recommend.

**Decide** which course suits you.

- Read about the experience of participants as well as gathering information on typical destinations upon completion.







## What experience do you need?

**Do not underestimate the value of practical workplace experience in this sector. Although academic qualifications are often necessary, experience can be what helps give you the edge over the competition. Unfortunately, the heritage sector is notorious for wanting practical experience from applicants, but often this will be unpaid.** Heritage institutions are aware of this and will put a lot of time and effort in to supporting volunteers and the experience you can gain will be invaluable.

Aim to volunteer and get involved both whilst at university and during vacations to ensure that your enthusiasm is backed by broad experience and expertise. There are many things you can do to volunteer: sell tickets; organise publicity; work with customers; book outside performers; negotiate sponsorship; organise venues and transport; manage money and records. All of these will demonstrate your commitment and give you the ability to show potential employers proof of your relevant skills.

### Volunteering

Some places will actively recruit volunteers, but most will rely on you getting in touch with them. Large museums and libraries should have a section on their website about volunteering and how to apply for volunteer roles, but because of this they might also be oversubscribed, so it can be worth approaching smaller places too.

National and regional institutions might offer a great volunteering programme, but smaller organisations might offer a broader range of experience. Spend time researching the organisation, find out what would be best for you and suggest specified areas you want to volunteer in. Bear in mind that many places will have rather long waiting lists, so the sooner you get in touch, the better.

Remember that it's not the amount of experience you gain through volunteering but what you make of it that will count in your favour when looking to progress your career in museums or galleries.

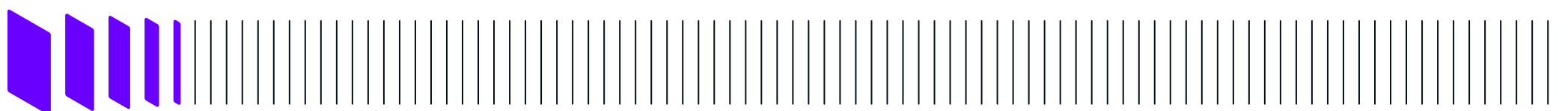
- The 'Mark Your Mark' campaign has a dedicated website for heritage volunteering opportunities across Scotland: <https://volunteer.makeyourmark.scot/index-classic>

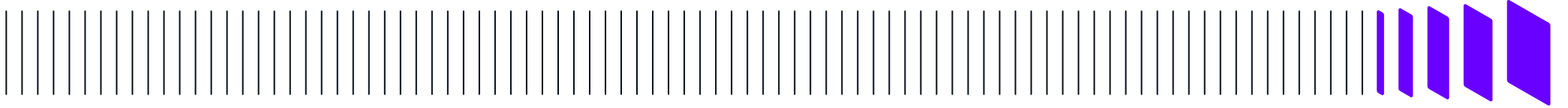
### Internships and Traineeships

Where formal internships and traineeships are offered, they are likely to be listed alongside jobs and other opportunities. Look at the 'get involved' or 'about us' pages of an organisation's website to look for internships; most places will now advertise opportunities on their social media too. Ideally internships should be paid, if they're not, make sure you check carefully what is being offered and what the role will involve require before applying.

- Museums Galleries Scotland offers courses, workshops and events for anyone looking to get into the sector: <https://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/events/>
- The ICON Internship programme provides internships for those interested in conservation: <https://www.icon.org.uk/careers/icon-internship-programme.html>

**See the lists in the Resources section about organisations to contact about volunteering and other possible internships and traineeship providers.**





## Getting a job

After you have done all the hard work of gaining experience and any qualifications, and fully worked out what sort of role you would like to go into, it is time to find that perfect job.

Adverts for heritage jobs will be on all the usual jobsites, but websites like [Museum Jobs](#) are worth checking for more specialised opportunities. Think about looking at university websites for academic roles and bigger employers like [English Heritage](#) and the [National Trust](#) as they will have opportunities coming up regularly.

Roles will be advertised based on need from the organisation: seasonal events, new funding, new projects or roles becoming vacant. That means that you might be working on applications over a long period of time – don't give up though, there are lots of things you can do in the meantime.

### Temporary and seasonal work

Temporary jobs are often an initial step that enable aspiring arts professionals to demonstrate their ability, network with others and continue to learn and develop. They are often found in organisations in receipt of short-term funding, or seasonal events such as major cultural festivals e.g. [Edinburgh Festival Fringe](#).

There are dozens of events and festivals (literary; arts; music; theatre) where you might be able to secure paid work and/or free entry if volunteering:

- Look for box-office or front-of-house roles in local arts venues – research on the individual festival website, or use sites that provide information on multiple festivals, e.g. [Festaff](#).
- Consider a speculative approach. For example, if you have IT (or design/ marketing/ translation etc.) skills, and could improve a local arts organisation's work, get in touch to suggest a project you could do.

### Think laterally

Skills gained from other industries could provide you with some transferable experience, particularly when coupled with relevant volunteering. You could work for an organisation that 'serves' the arts and heritage sector. There are specialist firms that work mainly or only with this field, including architects, manufacturers, events companies, marketers, consultancies, printers, shippers, packagers, conservators, insurers, trainers, recruiters and many more.

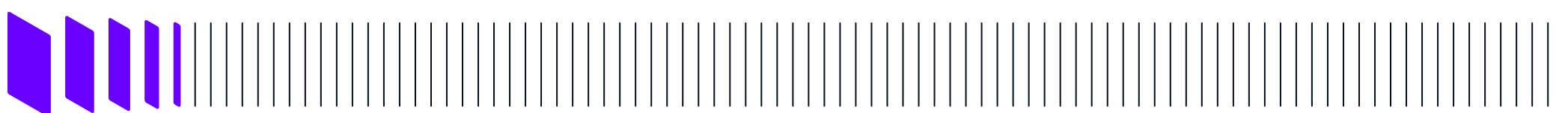
### Stay in touch and network

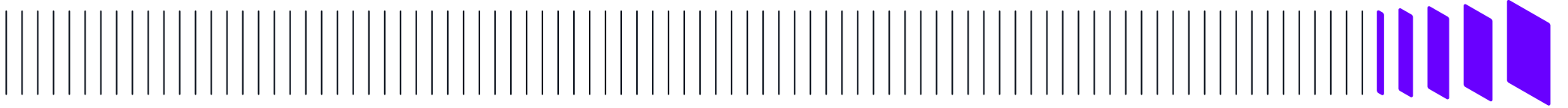
It is worthwhile joining professional associations as a student member to access networking events, keep up with sector news and add any professionals in the sector you've worked with on LinkedIn. Make the effort to keep in touch with your contacts and let them know when you are job seeking and keep volunteering!

[The University of Edinburgh Arts and Heritage Society](#) is a student-run group that run a programme of social events (often gallery visits and socials) and sometimes share opportunities from other organisations in heritage. It is worth checking out their activities and their social events - this might be your first network!

[Jiscmail](#) provides e-mail discussion lists for the UK education and research communities. There are a number of relevant lists you can join depending on your area of interest. Try searching for "archives" or "conservation" to find the list for you!

You can generally join **LinkedIn Groups** before you work in the area, (e.g. [Arts Administration Network](#)) to read discussions, find out about other jobs, network with those working/volunteering in heritage and learn key issues in the sector.





## Types of jobs

The heritage sector incorporates such a wide range of roles that it is not possible to cover them all! The focus here is on the types of jobs that staff have in the Library and University Collections department as these are the ones we know best.

For details on other career options within the heritage sector, have a look the [University of Birmingham's list](#) on the variety of possible roles within heritage. Some roles may be similar and overlapping or have different job titles depending on the organisation.



### Archivist

If you have an interest in history and in preserving records for posterity, a career as an archivist may be for you. Archivists acquire, manage and maintain documents and other materials that have historical importance. Archives can include books, papers, maps, plans, photographs and films. A large part of the job involves making information accessible to users.

Find out more if you are thinking about [a career in archives](#). Or read about one of our own staff's [pathway to becoming an Archivist](#).

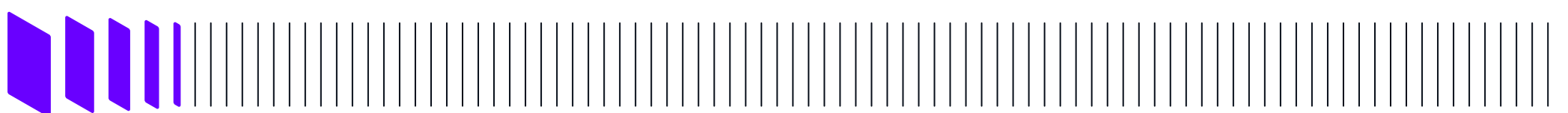
To become an archivist, you will need an undergraduate degree, followed by a postgraduate qualification accredited by the [Archives and Records Association \(ARA\)](#). The following universities all offer accredited courses: University of Aberystwyth, University College Dublin, University of Dundee, University of Glasgow, University of Liverpool and University College London.

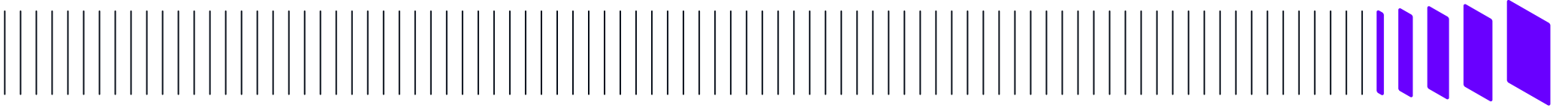
For archive jobs, join the [Archives-NRA list](#) and [Records Management UK list](#).

### Conservator

Museums, libraries and galleries employ conservators to care for their collections. This is often achieved by applying scientific methods to preserve and restore items. Work can involve a variety method of preventive (i.e., monitoring and controlling the environment in which collections are stored or displayed to prevent deterioration) and interventive (i.e., when actions are carried out to address the physical and chemical effects of damage to the collections) treatments.

Conservators tend to train and specialise in one class of object, e.g. paintings, and work closely with curators and other collection staff. Conservators can sometimes be employed on short-term contracts or as self-employed freelancers.





There are a few undergraduate degrees in conservation, but most people complete an undergraduate degree in a different subject and then study a Masters course in conservation. There are a few Masters courses taught around the UK that specialise in different types of conservation, with more than 30 universities offering courses. Find out about what they offer on the [Institute of Conservation's \(ICON\) website](#).

There are also occasionally Conservation [apprenticeships](#) hosted by local governmental organisations and the [ICON internship programme](#) which supports early career professionals to develop their careers and engage with professional networks.

You can find out more about how to become a [conservator](#), and [how to get into museum conservation](#). Or read about one of our own conservator's [day-to-day experiences](#).

## Museum Curator

Curators acquire, research, display and explain/write about objects in their care and are viewed as the academic experts for a collection. They usually have an academic background in a relevant field, and many advertisements for curators require postgraduate study. There are often Assistant Curators or Researchers in support roles at larger organisations.

In this job you'll be responsible for managing collections and works of art, dealing with the acquisition, care and display of items, and inform and educate the public. You may also deal with fundraising, marketing, and public relations.

Jobs are open to graduates from a range of backgrounds, with a good undergraduate honour's degree the minimum academic requirement. A postgraduate qualification is often necessary.

Find out more about the responsibilities of a [museum/gallery curator](#). Or read about the pathway [our Anatomical Museum's curator took into the profession](#).

## Exhibitions Officer

Working as an exhibitions officer is very varied. Overall, they are responsible for planning, organising, developing, marketing, administering, producing, sourcing and maintaining permanent or travelling exhibitions for museums and galleries.

The work is open to all graduates with a good undergraduate qualification, but you may be at an advantage if you have a relevant degree such as archaeology, archive and museum studies, art conservation, history or education. For Exhibition Officer roles in a museum, it is becoming increasingly necessary to have a Museum Studies degree. These are currently offered by: University of Glasgow, University of Durham, University of Aberdeen, University of St Andrews, University of Leicester, Newcastle University, University of York – to name a few of the most popular.

Work experience for this role is essential. Practical skills in setting up exhibitions and excellent organisational, time and project management skills are key. You'll also need a genuine interest in artefacts, art or other cultural material.

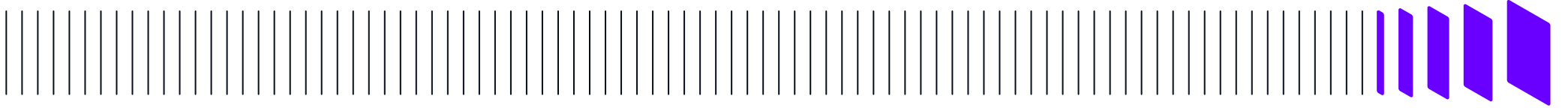
Read about the skills and responsibilities of a [museum/gallery exhibition officer](#).

## Museum Collections Manager and Registrar

Collections Managers are responsible for the management of objects under an institution's care, including their cataloguing, conservation, safety, acquisition and removal, storage and digital recording. In some larger institutions a Collections Manager might be supported by a 'Collections Assistant' role. A similar role, known as a Registrar, is also responsible for the objects,







particularly their transportation to other museums/galleries for loan or auctions. This may entail packing, arranging insurance and even travelling with the objects to ensure safe passage and suitable display.

Learn about the responsibilities and skills required of a [collections registrar](#) working in an art gallery. Or read about the [day-to-day of one of our own collections management staff](#).

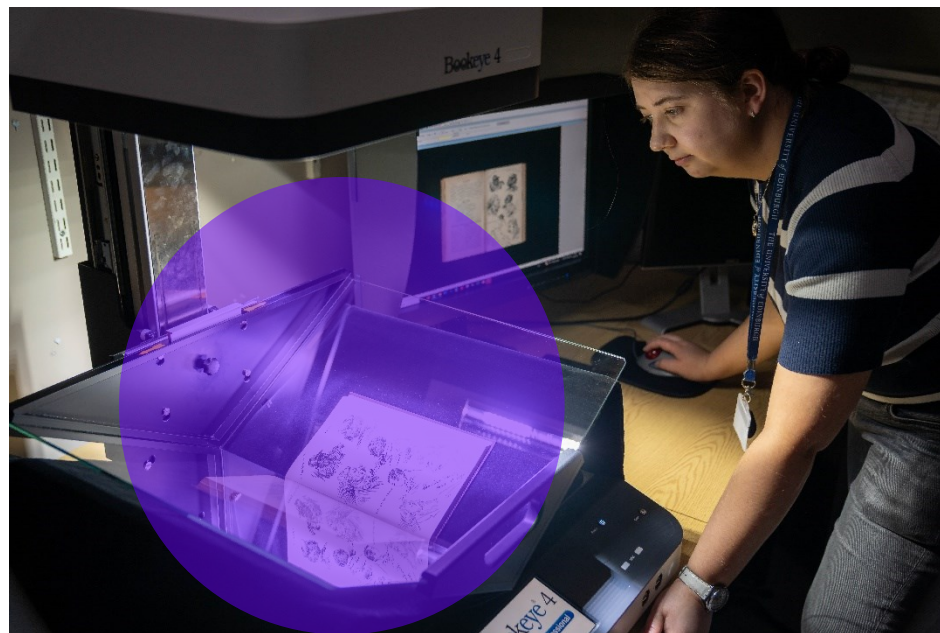
## Museum Education Officer

Education/Outreach Officers link arts organisations with the public. Their work includes the preparation and delivery of programmes, events and resources for schools and other visitors. You'll aim to deliver high quality programmes of learning and participation and ensure that the collections in a museum act as a learning resource for all ages.

You'll need at least an undergraduate degree to secure a job. Subjects such as education, community education, history, museum studies, cultural studies and archaeology may give you an advantage. Where you hope to work may have an influence on your degree, for example, a qualification in fine art or visual art may be useful for the V&A Museum, or a science and technology degree for the Science Museum.

Many will have a background in community work or education and education roles sometimes specify a preference for applicants with qualified teacher status (QTS), or a relevant academic specialism.

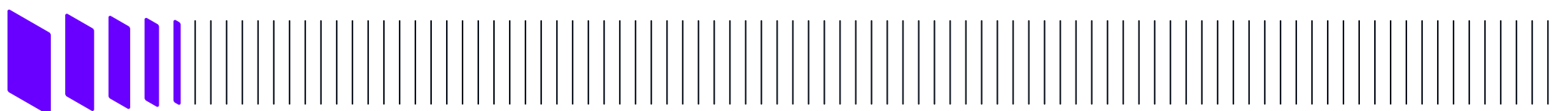
Find out what skills you'll need to become a [museum education officer](#).

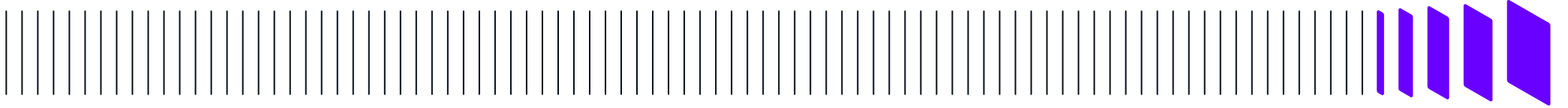


## Photographer, Digital Reformatting and Production Managers

Photographers or Digital Managers are usually only employed as full-time staff in large institutions (other smaller bodies would hire-in this skill when needed). They document exhibitions and collections to directly support online access and digital preservation. Their skillset can be comprised of specialist knowledge in imaging, audio and video production, scanning, digital restoration, special collections handling, quality assurance, workflow management, project management, metadata management, and information technology. They are typically supported by additional Project Managers, Information Managers, Librarians and Archivists who work to record and facilitate use of materials by the institution's users or visitors.

Read about the skills required for becoming a [photographer](#).





## Special Collections / Rare Books Librarian

Within librarianship there are a number of areas of specialism; some of which are mainly in the public sector libraries, and others within academic libraries. Our library staff mostly specialise in one of the following areas. Special Collections Librarians generally work with a variety of original primary source materials, including rare books, manuscripts, archives, and photographs that require specialised storage. They often have multiple job responsibilities including among others collection development, reference, cataloguing, preservation, instruction, and outreach.

Rare Book Librarians typically work with published materials from both the hand-press and machine-press periods. Although rare books are not easy to define, the criteria used to identify them is usually based on age, financial value, number of copies extant, and provenance.

Academic Liaison Librarians sometimes have dual/joint roles at their institutions. Liaison librarians are usually assigned to a department on campus based on their educational background or experience. They are expected to serve as a communication bridge between the library system and their department and vice versa in order to provide support for teaching, learning, and research. There are many roles for librarian liaisons in providing instruction sessions, research support, and collection development for their departments.

To become a librarian in any of these areas, first you will need a CILIP-accredited postgraduate qualification but there are also vocational qualifications available. Find out more on the [CILIP website](#), and the [IFLA website](#).

Find out about the skills and experience you'd need for these roles within the [public](#) and [academic](#) sectors.

## Customer Services, Retail, and Front of House Staff

User Services and Front of House teams are all essentially customer service teams who provide high quality access to collections and facilities through interacting with the public (or 'users') face-to-face, online (email, social media) or by phone. These posts do not always require specific knowledge of the heritage area in which they are located but require enthusiasm for engaging the public with the museum / library / archive. These posts do require strong customer service, communication and interpersonal skills, rather than formal qualifications.

The day-to-day work will vary between locations and often includes duties such as retail / cash handling, facilities support, events work, book / archive fetching and shelving, exhibition installation support and customer engagement (e.g., surveys). Within libraries there is significant overlap with IT support and certificates such as the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) are often cited in job adverts.

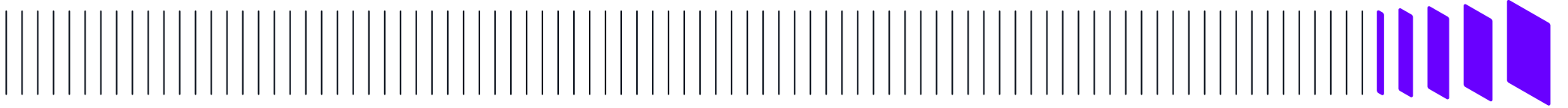
Managerial roles for these services require strong experience in people management, budgeting and often a relevant postgraduate degree or professional certification (e.g., Museum Studies, Library & Information Science, Archives & Records Management). Due to the varied nature of these roles, there often isn't a formal career path or qualification to follow. Details for information officer type roles can be found [here](#).

Read about the career pathway of one of our own [Front of House staff at St Cecilia's](#).

## Business Development / Commercial Manager

Income generation has become increasingly important to the heritage sector in recent years, as the government reduces their funding, and many trusts and foundations want to see heritage organisations taking greater responsibility for sustainability and future proofing the sector.





This has created a development in opportunities for those with business qualifications and entrepreneurial skills and experience to find employment in the sector.

In the main, these roles are focused on establishing or maintaining a variety of earned income streams such as venue hire, retail, catering, events, filming and photography, e-commerce, for example. To succeed in a business development role, you need to be good at spotting commercial opportunities, have a persuasive way in order to ‘sell’ a new idea and look ahead at emerging trends, in addition to being good at budgeting and aiming for high profits and few losses.

Most large heritage organisations will have business or commercial departments, but increasingly more rural or smaller heritage organisations are creating collectives and engaging the support of business or enterprise managers.

A good source for looking at jobs like this would be the [Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions](#) and the [Association of Cultural Enterprises](#).



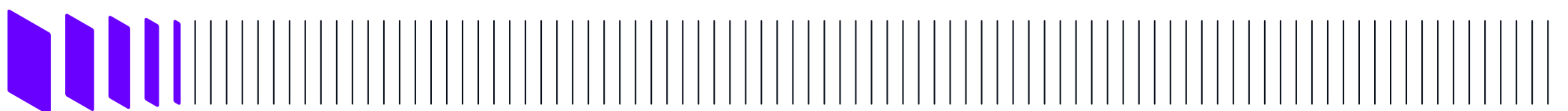
## Marketing / PR and Communications

Marketing, digital communication and PR areas are responsible for being the ‘voice of the brand’, raising the profile of the collections, exhibitions and heritage organisations, and reaching the organisation’s target markets. PR professionals do this through working with the media, marketing professionals through promotional materials, messaging and advertising, and digital by using digital media.

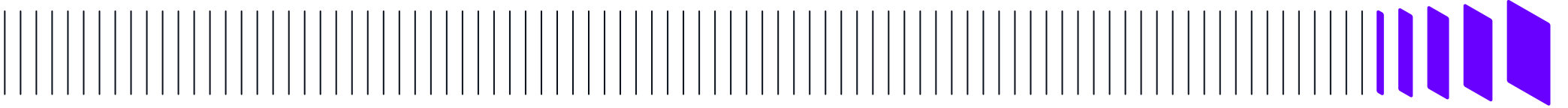
The responsibilities and remit of individuals in these roles will depend on the size of the organisation and the importance they place on marketing. It could encompass all areas or concentrate on one specialism.

As these career paths are not specific to museums, they don’t always follow the traditional routes and communications professionals often come into the sector from other industries. Likewise, although many follow the higher education route before embarking on their career, sometimes it is sufficient to simply have experience and an in-depth knowledge of the sector to progress.

You’ll usually enter work at an officer, assistant or executive level, progressing up to a manager role, and in larger organisations can progress to senior management and strategic positions. When in post, many professionals choose to gain further professional qualifications, often through the [Chartered Institute of Marketing \(CIM\)](#) or [Chartered Institute of Public Relations \(CIPR\)](#).







Read about the responsibilities of a [Marketing Executive](#) and a [Digital Marketer](#).

## Visitor Operations / Experience Manager

Staff engaged in visitor operations or as an experience manager will have overall responsibility for the historic site or venue; with a mix of business and heritage experience required.

You need to be highly organised and a good communicator to succeed in this area of the heritage sector. You would have responsibility for the planning, development and implementation of operations and will provide effective leadership to the Visitor Assistant teams and often the Education and Events Assistants too. These areas set the standard for the visitor experience and will play an instrumental role in maintaining and developing an outstanding level of customer service, taking responsibility for all areas of daily visitor operations.

You may also have responsibility for overseeing catering contractors, the security systems, and legislation around large public venues. This role requires an outgoing personality with a 'can do' attitude.

Qualifications and experience relating to a job like this tend to come from Hospitality, Tourism or Event Management courses. A good source for looking at jobs like this in Scotland is the [Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions](#).

## Health and Wellbeing

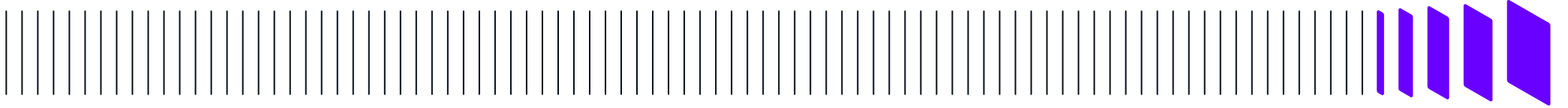
The positive connection of arts, culture and heritage on our health and wellbeing has a growing wealth of evidence that is now informing how this sector connects and works with healthcare and health policy. The broad cultural sector is quickly evolving to recognise the opportunities for the creation of strategic work that explores and promotes arts and wellbeing, and funders are developing criteria in response. Much of the sector have already been exploring our wellbeing through engagement work with schools or specific communities or groups but there is new impetus to explicitly design interventions that have planned outcomes that aim to improve our health and wellbeing. This, in turn, requires new ways of working across the cultural and the healthcare sectors; developing new partnerships, finding a common language and exploring joint funding opportunities.

New roles within the cultural sector are being created that have responsibility to evolve projects and strategies and that recognise where partnerships can develop as well as having an understanding of the worlds of both public health and arts and culture. For the heritage sector it is a fascinating area and roles, so far, have emerged from Learning, Engagement or Outreach.

The emphasis for the arts and cultural sector is on learning and engagement and the importance of having appropriate partnerships allows for safeguarding around specific physical or mental health challenges. Areas that many cultural organisations already work within are events for those living with dementia, out of hours or 'relaxed' visits and events for those with autism, specific interventions for people with either hearing or sight impairments. This area of work needs excellent communication skills, sensitivity to health challenges, an ability to recognise good partners and how to build partnerships and to understand how to design arts and creative intervention within a health environment.

With all of the above, there is a strong expectation that the future will afford new roles in the heritage sector where an understanding of heritage and health sectors and how heritage can support health objectives will be a new key combination of knowledge and experience for evolving jobs.

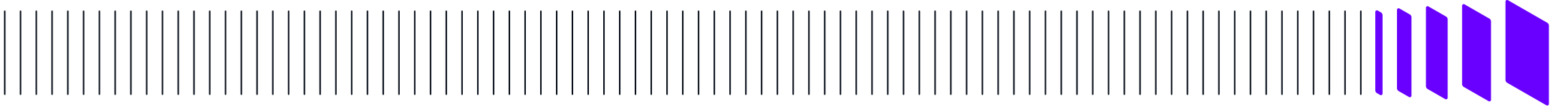




Other roles that can also give experience in the heritage sector include:

- **Administration** – a role vital to all organisations, and can be a useful entry point, leading to progression to a more specialised role
- **Digital media/technology** – social media officers/managers to run the venues social media accounts and editors, writers, and specialists to manage the museum's website. There's an ever-increasing need following the Covid-19 pandemic for digitally savvy practitioners in the sector with a wide range of skills and interests, from websites and app development to online learning and digital interactivity.
- **Finance and fundraising** – accountants, financial managers and fundraising officers.
- **HR and recruitment** – to oversee the workforce, manage recruitment and encourage volunteers.
- **Volunteer Manager** – responsible for recruitment, training, development and retention of an organisation's volunteers.
- **Social Justice, Decolonisation, and Climate Crisis** – alongside Health & Wellbeing these are relatively new skills that are becoming increasingly important in the heritage sector in terms of the diversity of the sector and how we approach museums as institutions and the objects in collections.
- The Museums Association has details of skills needed for future heritage or non-traditional roles: [Skills for the future - Museums Association](#)





## Real Life Careers

**In this section you can hear from some staff from the Heritage Collections, their chosen career path and top tips.**

### [Museum Curator](#)

**Malcolm MacCallum, Anatomical Museum Curator / Researcher**

I was an undergraduate in Scottish History and was fortunate that the Museum of Scotland at NMS was in development when I started looking for work. I started work there as a graphic researcher for the new displays, before moving into a series of curatorial roles, initially as an Assistant Curator then Project Researcher. During this time, I also completed a postgraduate certificate in Museum and Gallery Studies at the University of St Andrews. I then worked as Senior Curator at the National Football Museum in England, before becoming Exhibitions Manager at the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh and finally curator at the Anatomical Museum.

My tip would be **as flexible as possible** – both in **what you want to ‘curate’** (I started off working with collections relating to Scottish medieval history, moved onto airplanes, then football, then history of surgery and now anatomy collections) and in **where you want to work**, both geographically and in what type of museum. Smaller museums often offer a chance to get experience in all aspects of the museum industry (research, public engagement, collections management, exhibition development etc.), but you will almost certainly have to get volunteering experience in the heritage sector before starting to get considered for any vacancy. Curator jobs are hard to come by and are often part time or use short term contracts. It’s worthwhile thinking of **what transferable skills you have** and how you can utilise them within the wider sector (*could you develop education materials for museums or podcasts? Can you offer your services as a freelance researcher or developer of exhibitions?*).

### [Archivist](#)

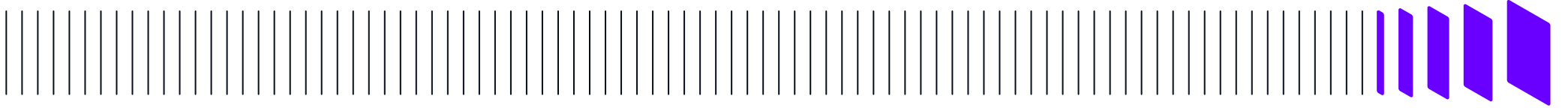
**Louise Williams, Lothian Health Services Archive Archivist**

I am a career-change archivist – the job had always appealed to me, and a move to Edinburgh was the push I needed to re-train. I found out about what the job entailed online, so knew that I’d need a vocational qualification, and to get onto one of these I’d need to have some experience of an archive environment. So I volunteered for a day a week at LHSA back in 2009 - 2010 (sometimes it feels strange doing the job I do now because of this!) and at the Royal College of Nursing archives, around a part-time job in the voluntary sector. I ended up being accepted onto the MSc in Information Management and Preservation at the University of Glasgow. Post-qualification, I was offered a temporary paid role at the National Records of Scotland where I’d been volunteering at the time. I didn’t need to be a qualified archivist for the job, but was able to pick up some valuable skills along the way. After this, I got a short-term contract cataloguing (describing and ordering) a collection created by missionaries held at the School of Divinity, University of Edinburgh. My next role was a longer-term contract working on neurosurgery archives here in LHSA. In the middle of that I was seconded into my present role as Archivist when a colleague left back in 2014.

**My top tips:** It sounds obvious, but **make sure you know what an archivist does and the different aspects of the job**. Volunteering is a great way to find this out, and you’ll need some experience of being in an archive to apply for a professional qualification. Careers in archives, museums, galleries and libraries are not interchangeable, so make sure you’re aware of the different options open to you too. **If you can, take a few risks!** Early-career roles are often short-term contracts, from a few months to a couple of years. This is far from ideal, but it’s the current reality: it’s now extremely rare that someone’s first role after qualification will be an open-ended / permanent one. **Don’t expect jobs to be in one place** – you may have to move around a bit. But building up this experience is a big step to applying for permanent roles. Also, it’s best to **be open to looking after all sorts of material**: don’t dismiss potentially valuable experience because it’s not about your main interests, or you won’t be ready to get that dream job when it does come along! **Don’t under-estimate your existing skills**. It’s a common misconception that archivists sit on their own in dark rooms surrounded by dusty books and parchment. As an archivist, you’ll use skills in customer service, outreach and communication (talking to everyone from children to pensioners), project management, working in a team, research and analysis, social media... to name a few. So don’t forget to highlight these when you’re looking for both paid and voluntary roles.







## Customer Service, Retail and Front of House

### **Margarita Vazquez Ponte, Museum Assistant / Virtual Access Assistant**

My first Degree was an MA in Art History at Edinburgh University. I funded myself with several part time jobs, the main one being an Usher at the Edinburgh Filmhouse, I subsequently moved to the box office there and eventually became a duty manager. The hours were flexible and fitted around my studies and continued to fund me at Edinburgh College of Art for a BA in Fine Art and also MA in Fine Art. On leaving Art School I moved to Italy and worked full time as a free-lance artist there and India for 10 years. I came back to Edinburgh and tried to re-immerser myself into the art work here but post the global economic markets crash, the art world was tough and unyielding! I kept myself going with other front of house jobs at the Traverse Theatre and also for the Festivals Office at Edinburgh University which eventually led me to this job at St Cecilia's.

I work 3 days a week which allows me time to pursue other art projects but means I have a modest but steady income. As we are a small museum, everyone multitasks, so as well as looking after the reception, I also deal with venue hire, invoicing, writing and giving tours of the instruments (from an art history point of view) and a myriad of other tasks.

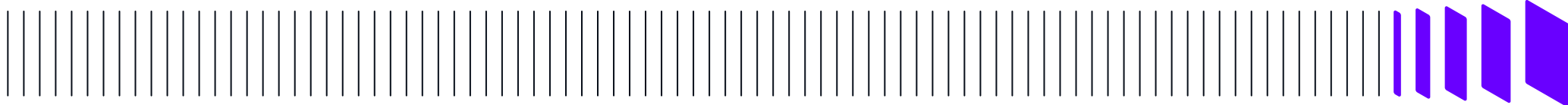
**Tips:** sounds corny but **be a team player**, always volunteer for things at work and try to go above and beyond the call of duty. **Make yourself indispensable!** Everyone wants to have a team player around and in these competitive job market times that counts for a lot.

## Conservation and Collections Management

From the Day in the Life blog series about the behind the scenes of Heritage Collections and the Centre for Research Collections, three blogs by staff in the Conservation and Collections Management team.

- **Robyn Rogers** shares her day-to-day as a **Collections *Care* Technician** in the blog post [“Books, Boxes and Bugs! A day in the life of a Collections Care Technician at the Centre for Research Collections”](#).
- Equally read about **Jasmine Hide**'s day to day as a **Collections *Management* Technician** in [“CRC: A Space Odyssey – Day in the Life of a Collections Management Technician”](#).
- Or **Abigail Hartley**'s blog about the day to day of an **Appraisal Archivist** and about what appraisal is in the heritage sector: [“Appraisal Made Easy \(If Only...\): A Day in the Life of an Appraisal Archivist”](#).





## Applications

When you're putting an application together for a job there are a few things to think about:

It is essential to **tailor each application** to the job you are applying for.

Make yourself a **list of the bullet points that you should address in your application** based on the person specification / job requirements.

**Address each of the essential criteria** and as many of the desirable criteria as truthfully as possible – but don't just state that you possess a skill, **give an example**.

Work out which are '**soft skills**' which relate to your attitude – e.g., enthusiasm or the ability to work well in a team. And which are '**concrete skills**' that relate to your knowledge or experience – e.g., previous experience of conservation or a knowledge of the LC classification.

**Don't try to include everything you have done in your application.**

If you have a lot of examples for a particular concrete skill, **select your best example** to include in the application.

**Don't make any negative remarks**, either about your own skills or your current or past employment.

**Do your research – show that you've learned as much as possible about the organisation.**

Have thought about where your own skills can complement and enhance what is already happening in the organisation.

Think about the organisation you are applying to.

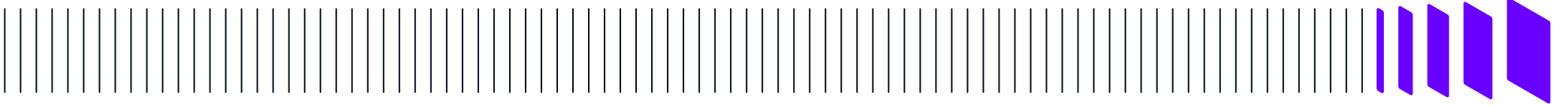
**How do their organisational aims and strengths fit in with your career plans?**

**Always complete all sections of the application form fully.**

If you are given the option to supply a CV rather than complete an additional information box it is helpful to supply both.

Use the further information box or covering letter to add your reasons for applying for the post and explain how your skills and experiences match the specific job.





## Resources

### Museums and Galleries

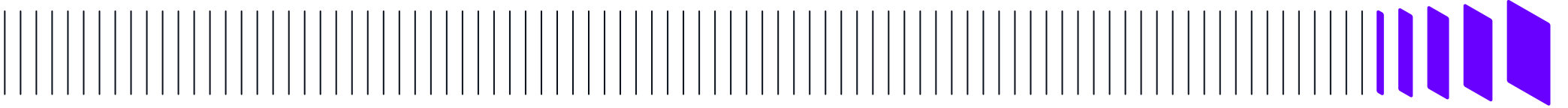
- [Museums Association](#) – The national membership body for those working or interested in museums in all four nations. Useful for museum sector news, events and jobs board for members.
- [Museums Galleries Scotland](#) – The national development body for Scotland’s museums and galleries. They run skills development programmes (including supporting museum apprenticeships) and advertise jobs & volunteering opportunities.
- [GEM \(Group for Education in Museums\)](#) – jobs board, training & professional development opportunities in heritage and cultural learning, one-to-one mentoring programmes for members.
- [ICON \(Institute of Conservation\)](#) – ICON is the professional charitable body, representing and supporting the practice and profession of conservation. They advertise conservation jobs in the UK as well as internship opportunities and advice for those seeking to get into conservation.
- [Leicester University Jobs Desk](#) – jobs, internships and volunteering listings source for museums and galleries, free and open to all not just Leicester University students.
- [National Museums Directors’ Council](#) – jobs board for opportunities in national & regional museums, libraries and archives.
- [Call for Curators](#) – curatorial opportunities across the globe, advertises some entry-level positions.
- [Gallery Jobs](#) – careers advice website on working in a gallery and looking for gallery jobs.
- [Museum Jobs](#) – jobs board for museums, galleries, libraries and archives, mainly UK-based positions but sometimes international.

### Heritage

- [Historic Environment Scotland](#) – jobs and other paid opportunities.
- [English Heritage](#) – jobs, volunteering and job alerts.
- [National Trust](#) - jobs, volunteering and internships.
- [National Trust for Scotland](#) – jobs, volunteering, and internship opportunities.
- [NatureScot](#) – jobs, volunteering and apprenticeships.
- [Scottish Community Heritage Alliance](#) – Supports individuals and organisations in community heritage in Scotland to platform more grassroots voices at a national level. Membership is free and they have active social media about events and what’s happening within community heritage.
- [Historic Royal Palaces](#) – jobs, volunteering, apprenticeships and work experience opportunities.
- [Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions \(ASVA\)](#) – the representative body for the Visitor Attractions sector in Scotland, they deliver training, networking and job opportunities (usually public-facing and community outreach roles)







## Libraries and Archives

- [CILIP](#) - main organisation in the UK representing information professionals. They provide support and professional accreditation to the sector. They list a large number of jobs and opportunities via [Lisjobnet](#).
- [Archives and Records Association](#) – the ARA lists current voluntary or paid placements opportunities to provide support and training for career professional development in the sector.
- For archives opportunities across the UK join the NRA Jiscmail List: [ARCHIVES-NRA@JISCMAIL.AC.UK](mailto:ARCHIVES-NRA@JISCMAIL.AC.UK)
- [MyJobScotland](#) – advertises local council library and museum jobs in Scotland.

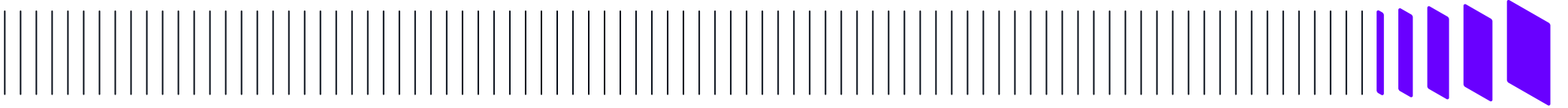
## General art and heritage

- [Creative Scotland - Opportunities](#) – Creative Scotland is the public body that supports the arts, screen and creative industries across all parts of Scotland. Their opportunities tool features paid and voluntary arts & heritage opportunities across Scotland, as well as professional development, funding & grants and training opportunities also.
- [Creative Opportunities](#) – creative sector jobs board run by University Arts London, open to all to register not just UAL students.
- [Arts Jobs](#) – Arts Council England-run job site for various arts jobs.
- [Art Festivals](#) – find local arts festivals volunteering and paid opportunities.
- [Culture 360 \(Asia-Europe Foundation\)](#) – international arts jobs and other paid opportunities in Asia and Europe.
- [Jobs.ac.uk](#) – jobs board for UK universities, with a specialist page for library services and information management.
- [Guardian Jobs](#) – jobs board and email job alerts.

## Volunteering ideas

- [Make Your Mark](#) – national campaign by heritage organisations that aims to encourage more people to volunteer with Scotland’s historical, cultural and nature organisations. Open-ended and varied volunteering opportunities.
- [Do It](#) - UK-wide database of volunteering opportunities.
- [Scottish Archives Map](#) – map of archive collections across Scotland, worth checking out and enquiring to see if any individual archives have volunteering opportunities available.
- [Volunteer Edinburgh](#) – general volunteering opportunities in and around Edinburgh, search for “Libraries/Information Management” under the ‘Activity’ filter for libraries and museums opportunities.
- [Glasgow Life](#) – general volunteering opportunities run by Glasgow City Council, some opportunities in museums & libraries.
- [Creative Lives](#) – volunteering opportunities on creative projects in the UK and Ireland.





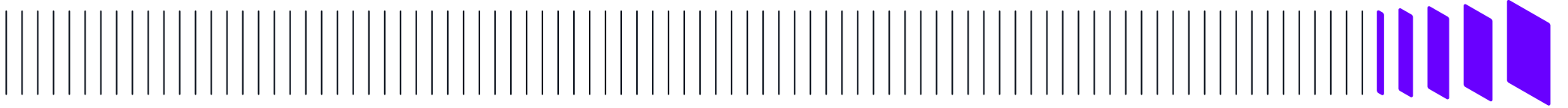
## Internships and Traineeships

- [University of Edinburgh Internships](#) – internship opportunities for UoE students occasionally come up within Heritage Collections, worth keeping an eye on the Volunteers and Interns page.
- [Waddesdon \(House & Gardens\)](#) - an annual live-in paid internship programme based at Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire featuring several different possible roles such as Marketing, Visitor & Conservation Management and Heritage Project/Operations Management.
- [British Library](#) – occasional internships available through their job portal in different areas such as admin and conservation.

## Apprenticeships

- [Museums Galleries Scotland](#) – information on the two types of modern apprenticeships MGS supports Scottish heritage organisations with; Digital Marketing and Museums & Galleries Technician. Advertised annually through the host organisation usually.
- [National Archives](#) – information on the Level 7 Archivist and Records Manager apprenticeship. 3 year apprenticeship, supported by the National Archives at another host archive in England. Advertised through the host archive, most likely during the summer.
- [National Trust](#) – information on the various apprenticeship roles they run, most roles are advertised in April for August/September start. All roles are advertised through the Government's find an apprenticeship service and also on UCAS.





**If you have any comments or questions about this document, please contact:**

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COLLECTIONS**



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