Medical History Museum

Student/Volunteer Position Guide

Position Title: Research Assistant – Exhibitions (several positions)

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

Position Goal: The primary goal of this position will be to assist the Curator in researching the theme and identifying potential items in the collection to be included in an upcoming exhibition at the Medical History Museum. The forthcoming exhibition program will explore some fascinating themes which broadly will include - Bush medicine: the art of healing, Rituals of birthing, Public Health aftermath of Word War 1 and a History of Psychiatry in Victoria.

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.

The Medical History Museum runs a changing exhibition program that encompasses a broad range of themes linking scientific discovery with society and culture. Exhibitions include historical and contemporary issues examining the role of medicine in society. A diverse approach is taken to the areas explored by the exhibition program covering public health, significant medical innovations and catalysts for change in society. Future themes will include the cultural and social impact of certain medical conditions and attitudes to changing practices. Further information can be found at http://medicalhistorymuseum.mdhs.unimelb.edu.au/

Responsibilities: Under the supervision of the Curator, the student/volunteer will assist in researching a theme for an upcoming exhibition. Through the project there will be the opportunity to research collection material, develop a list of suggested works for inclusion and write extended labels on selected objects. The student will also have the opportunity to assist with the layout, design and the physical installation of the exhibition, along with other tasks that relate to the mounting of the exhibition as directed.
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 or Museum Studies would be ideal).

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

Good communication and sound research and writing skills are needed.

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

An interest in the history of medicine would be ideal.

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 on a high profile exhibition and see the curatorial process in action from the planning and development stages through to exhibition design and the eventual installation.

Professional development through experience gained in curatorial and collection management procedures and practice. This includes experience in handling museum objects as well as the creation of intellectual content.

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:
Helen Arnoldi, Cultural Collections Projects Coordinator
Telephone: 8344 3103
Email harnoldi@unimelb.edu.au