

Museums and Collections Projects Program 2021

University of Melbourne

Medical History Museum

Project Description

Curatorship – Display, Australian Medical Association, Victoria

The Project

This project offers the opportunity for two students working in partnership to develop and install a themed display on medical history at the Australian Medical Association (Victoria) headquarters using the collections of the Medical History Museum as the focus. This project will increase awareness of the museum's significant collections to a wider audience.

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. The Australian Medical Association Collection was loaned to the University when the association's own museum closed in 1994. This collection was formally donated in 2011, greatly enhancing the Medical History Museum's historical material.

Details

Working in consultation with the Director, the students will be able to develop a themed display exploring an aspect of medical history for exhibition in the boardroom of AMA Victoria's headquarters on Royal Parade in Parkville. This curatorial project involves exploring collection materials from across the Medical History Museum's collections, and then selecting items that illustrate this theme. Practical issues involved with the exhibition space will need to be considered (eg. conservation issues to do with light levels) as it is anticipated that the display will remain on show for six months. Once the proposed theme is approved and suitable works have been selected, the students will write an introductory wall text and individual labels/extended labels for the exhibition and be involved in its installation in the AMA boardroom. This project would suit students who have an interest in medical history and an understanding of collection management principles specific to the documentation of museum objects (progress towards a relevant degree and/or previous volunteer experience with an Archive, Museum or Historical Society would be ideal). Knowledge of the correct procedures for the safe handling of objects is required as is a methodical, prudent approach with a keen eye for detail.

Benefits

Opportunity to work at close hand with one of the University of Melbourne's extensive cultural collections and for 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 which will be seen by many high-profile visitors, students and members of the academic and general community.

Supervisor

Dr Jacqueline Healy, Director Museums – Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

