The Tiegs Zoology Museum, School of Bio Sciences

Student/Volunteer Position Guide

Position Title: Collection Management – Catalogue Assistant (two positions available)

Supervisor: Trish Koh – Technical Officer, School of BioSciences; Collection Manager, Tiegs Zoology Museum
Dr David Young – Director, Tiegs Zoology Museum
Helen Arnoldi, Museums and Collections Projects Program Coordinator

Position Goal: The primary goal of this position will be to catalogue objects within the storage areas of the Tiegs Zoology Museum that have not been previously documented. This project will also involve reviewing, updating and cross-checking existing catalogue records of collection items in storage that have been partially documented previously. New and updated catalogue records will be added to a spreadsheet which will aid in the management, accessibility, long-term preservation and appreciation of the collection.

Background: The Tiegs Zoology Museum of the University of Melbourne was established in the late 1880s and is Australia’s oldest university museum of zoology. The collection, accumulated over 120 years, has specimens contributed by the first Professor of the department, Sir Walter Baldwin Spencer. It has an extensive collection of specimens representing the whole animal kingdom, ranging from small invertebrates to prepared whole-mounts and skeletons of vertebrates including an African lion, and a moa (an extinct emu-like bird from New Zealand). A comprehensive range of Australian animals comprises the skulls of many marsupials and others of increasing significance as the species becomes endangered. The collection also includes eleven ‘type’ specimens of marine invertebrates; these are the original specimens used to describe new species. There is also an extensive collection of microscope slides, with contributions from Professor Spencer and other former researchers in the department, and a large number of reprints and other historical documents of cultural significance. For more information see Tiegs Zoology Museum.

Responsibilities: Working under the direction of the Tiegs Museum’s collection manager and with additional guidance from the Museum Director, the students/volunteers will be cataloguing collection items currently located in a compactus and storage areas of the Museum. As part of the cataloguing process, it will be necessary to first review each object against the Museum’s register and existing spreadsheet to check it has not previously been catalogued. If it has already been catalogued, information within the existing records can be checked and expanded where necessary in fields such as acquisition details (if known), condition, inscriptions, location and other gaps in the catalogue. If no catalogue record exists, a new catalogue entry for the item will be created which will include the assigning of an accession number and updating of the Museum’s register. Additional related cataloguing tasks may include: the physical labelling/numbering of the object and the taking of digital images to be added to the catalogue. As part of the process, the item may also need to be rehoused to meet museum standards. The
newly generated catalogue information will be entered onto a spreadsheet in the first instance ready to be imported into an electronic museum database in the future. This project would ideally suit two student/volunteers working together.

Qualifications: A basic understanding of collection management principles specific to the documentation of museum objects (progress towards the completion of a degree in Art Curatorship/Museum Studies/Conservation and/or previous volunteer experience with an Archive, Museum or Historical Society is desirable).

Knowledge of the correct procedures for the safe handling of objects is required as this position requires the handling and close inspection of vulnerable museum objects.

An interest in zoology would be beneficial.

A methodical, prudent approach with a keen eye for detail is required.

Training and Supervision: On-the-job training specific to the requirements of the position will be given.

Occasional meetings with the Museum and 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 in working closely with the Tiegs Zoology Museum’s significant holdings and seeing the collection more fully catalogued and documented. 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:
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