

VOLUNTEERS POLICY

1 Purpose

Volunteers play an important role within the Library, Special Collections contributing to the overall success of the department. As such, volunteers are encouraged and supported whenever possible.

This policy gives guidance to staff and volunteers supervising or engaged in voluntary activities within Special Collections. Within the scope of this policy, a volunteer is anyone who, without financial compensation, or expectation of it, performs duties at the direction of and on behalf of Special Collections. Volunteers are appointed to enhance the work of paid employees, not as a substitute for them.

2 Role of volunteers

There are opportunities within all the various sections of Special Collections. Volunteers are engaged in assisting with collection cataloguing (both rare books and archives), collection care and as part of public engagement assisting the exhibition and learning and outreach sections.

Volunteers provide additional resources allowing us to undertake new projects and increase our capacity to deal with existing ones. They bring a diversity and depth of subject knowledge and are a key part in helping us achieve our strategic aims. Working with volunteers is a key part of our commitment to engage with the wider community and lifelong learning. Also by accommodating volunteers to gain experience of work in a heritage environment, this helps in providing a route to further professional training, study or employment.

3 Application process

Special Collections recognise that people volunteer for a variety of reasons and, as such, will endeavour to arrange placements so they are as mutually beneficial as possible to both parties. Consequently, volunteer placements will be made by interview and discussion with appropriate staff members, to match the applicant's skills, talents, interests and desires with the needs of the Special Collections. Selection for interview will be based on the Volunteer Enquiry Form or the applicant's CV where appropriate. Selected applicants will be asked to provide the names and contact details of two referees. Every effort is made to accommodate students of the University of Aberdeen wishing to become volunteers, particularly where a vocational interest is expressed.

Volunteers will be directly accountable to a named member of staff and will be asked to discuss and agree a written job description prior to beginning their placement. At this stage, the volunteer and their supervising member of staff will agree when and how much time is to be committed. The placement may be cancelled immediately at any time at the discretion of either of the parties and will expire automatically at the end of the period of agreement unless renewed by both parties. An initial review will be undertaken after a mutually agreed period of time. Training will be given to all volunteers where necessary to enable them to carry out the tasks detailed in the volunteer job description. Training needs will be reviewed and updated regularly.

For more information see here – www.abdn.ac.uk/special-collections/volunteering-90.php

4 Management of personal data

Personal details of volunteers will be held on a database, accessible only to authorised staff. Information will not be divulged to third parties without the individual's consent. Enquiries by applicants will be held on file for one year and will be reviewed within this period should a suitable opportunity become available.

5 Health & Safety

There is no upper age limit, but volunteers should not continue beyond a point which is detrimental to their health and safety or where they cannot carry out their tasks effectively. Volunteers are required to share responsibility for Health and Safety, and to follow the University's Health and Safety Policy. They are also required to exercise particular care when working with, or near to, museum objects or archival material. Any personal protective equipment required to carry out agreed tasks will be provided by the supervising member of staff. Volunteers should discuss any health conditions with their supervising member of staff if it may affect their ability to carry out their assigned tasks. Volunteers are covered by University insurance whilst undertaking duties on behalf of Special Collections.

6 Confidentiality

All volunteers are expected to maintain the confidentiality of privileged information to which they may be exposed while carrying out their assigned tasks.

7 Honorary Curatorial Assistants

Established volunteers may be appointed as Honorary Curatorial Assistants where they demonstrate a substantial and continuing commitment. Nominations are made by the Head of Special Collections and appointments are made and reviewed on an annual basis in the first instance. Honorary status brings with it additional benefits, including access to University library, sports and IT facilities.

8 Equal Opportunities

Every opportunity will be taken to provide equality of access to reflect the diversity of users, including future users and eliminate discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion and belief. All opportunities will be taken to communicate with users and seek their views and opinions on services. Special Collections will respond and, where possible, make improvements to reflect the interests of its users. To gain further information please see the University's Equality and Diversity Policy.

9 Responsibility and Review

This policy has been approved by LSC&M Senior Management Team in January 2017 and will be reviewed on an annual basis.