University of Edinburgh

Job Description

1. Job Details

Job title: Assistant Curator

School/Support Department: IS/ Libraries, Museums and Galleries

Unit (if applicable): Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments

Line manager: Director, EUCHMI

2. Job Purpose

The professional care and maintenance in playing regimes of musical instruments in the University's two instrument museums

3. Main Responsibilities

1. To maintain, regulate and tune instruments in playing regimes (including historical keyboard instruments in teaching departments) and prepare instruments for performance, demonstration and recording; moving instruments

2. To contribute to the documentation of the Collection (including technical drawings) and interpretative texts for the museum galleries

3. To conserve and in some cases restore Collection instruments within agreed policies and priorities

4. To ensure the appropriate conditions for the display and storage of the instruments, within agreed guidelines, and to take measures necessary for their conservation so that they are preserved as part of the international heritage.

5. To supervise and guide visitors at all levels of interest and knowledge at St Cecilia's Hall Museum of Instruments, including demonstration of instruments

6. Supervising cleaning and maintenance of museums galleries and associated spaces

7. Training volunteer guides

8. Writing procedures and guidance for users of St Cecilia’s Hall

9. Dealing with enquiries and selling publications
4. Planning and Organising

Planning environmental and condition monitoring, within agreed guidelines
Planning and delivering group visits and guided tours

5. Problem Solving

Resolving technical problems in the restoration and maintenance of irreplaceable historic items

6. Decision Making

Deciding, in consultation with the Curator and Director, on the degree of access to instruments to be given to scholars and musicians

7. Key Contacts/Relationships

Line management reporting upward to Director of EUCHMI
Day-to-day liaison Director, Curator and Collections Support Officer
Liaison with musicians and scholars using the instruments
Liaison with wide spread of University staff including support services
Contact with students: as users of the Collections; in taught classes; postgraduates whose research is supervised; as volunteers and casual employees
Contact with the general public as visitors to the Collections and customers, specialist visitors
Relations with contractors such as designers, printers, mount makers, sound editors, photographers, cataloguers

8. Knowledge, Skills and Experience Needed for the Job

Practical skills in the conservation, maintenance and restoration of historic musical instruments including:

a) Tuning to a high degree of accuracy by ear in most historical temperaments and equal temperament (ten or more recognised tuning systems).

b) Skills in setting up actions of harpsichords and early pianos, in particular, quilling, voicing and regulation of actions of harpsichords.

c) Tuning modern pianos and smaller pipe organs.

d) Restoration of most mechanical aspects of early keyboard instruments including fabrication of missing components – e.g. harpsichord jacks, hammers etc. Skills in repairing split and damaged soundboards, etc.

e) Restringing instruments according to historical practices using reproduction wire informed by recent research.
f) Documentation of work including detailed notes, photographs, preparation of restoration proposals and reports; gathering of measurement data on instruments for publication and the on-line catalogue; preparation of full-sized technical drawings of selected instruments (for sale)
g) Conservation of removed original and non–original parts
h) Applying principles of balance between conservation and restoration in consultation with colleagues.
i) Production of teaching and learning aids including (e.g. interpretive panels, working models, etc.)
j) Preparation of instruments for University concerts and recordings.
k) Instruction of students.
l) Communication skills including demonstrating instruments to the public.

9. Dimensions

Responsibility for maintaining, within agreed guidelines and in consultation with the Curator and Director, nearly 100 early keyboard instruments with insurance valuation of £6M. University Collections comprises around 65 staff, many of whom are Library, Museums and Galleries professionals. Library, Museums and Galleries comprises over 200 staff serving a University community of 20,000 students and 7,000 staff across 17 sites.

10. Job Context and any other relevant information