University of Edinburgh

1. Job Details

Job title: Special Collections Manager and University Archivist

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

Unit (if applicable): Collections Division

Line manager: Director of University Collections

2. Job Purpose

To shape the strategic development of Special Collections with the Director of University Collections, plan accordingly and manage its functions, services, and staff.

3. Main Responsibilities

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<th>Approx. % of time</th>
<th>\multicolumn{1}{l}{1. Plan, develop and monitor work programmes to realise strategic goals}</th>
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<td>15</td>
<td>2. Manage functions and staff to ensure service provision</td>
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<td>3. Generate external funding to develop collections and services</td>
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<td>4. Forge partnerships with academics and academic work groups to produce new projects, and contribute to joint teaching and research programmes</td>
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<td>5. Examine and control policy and procedures for main functions and services to ensure up to date provision operating in line with professional and legal standards</td>
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<td>6. Direct the operational management of the University’s corporate archives to preserve its evidential record and ensure legal compliance for public access requirements</td>
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<td>7. Promote collection development and management, to ensure continued high quality donations/purchases, major exhibition loans and outreach</td>
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<td>8. Freedom of Information (FOI) Promoter for IS to aid development of records management and legal compliance across support group</td>
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4. Planning and Organising

Responsible for the Special Collections annual work plan designed in consultation with line manager to comply with strategic objectives of IS. Objectives are reviewed via meetings with line manager and divisional management team and are also influenced by factors such as availability of IT support. There is an ongoing need to anticipate and react to professional and research trends, and monitor potential effects of legislation through professional associations, contact with governing agencies and key colleagues. Discerning funding opportunities, subsequent planning and coordination of major project bids to set deadlines.

5. Problem Solving

The dual challenge of ensuring effective long term preservation of both ‘born digital’ and digitised material, requiring judicious deployment of staff/project resources and fostering of internal/external collaborations. Balancing legislative requirements for access to information against type of request and available resources utilising interpretative guidance and invoking specialist advice as required.

Increasing pressure on space necessitating stricter control of space planning, acquisitions and de-accessions in line with Collections policy and consequent need to reconcile affected stakeholders.

6. Decision Making

Decisions normally taken with minimal recourse to senior colleagues utilising technical guidance include: Recruitment and assignment of curatorial and support staff in response to strategic/urgent objectives. Appropriate level of accommodation, security and conservation measures to ensure stability and protection of collections/items in closed access, public areas or on international exhibition loan.
Decides/recommends whether restricted information may be disclosed for research purposes. Approval/rejection of proposals for acquisition by transfer, donation or purchase. The shape, emphases and budgets of major project bids and how to negotiate alterations to project plans with funding agencies.

7. Key Contacts/Relationships

Frequent contact with colleagues in the Collections and Digital Library Divisions, and regular contact with most other parts of the Library Museums and Galleries, and Information Services, including senior management teams for strategic planning and operational purposes. Academic and administrative staff in collaborating Colleges, Schools, academic units and other support groups for strategic, developmental, service provision and administrative purposes. Local, national and international contact with other university libraries, archives and cultural services, professional associations, representative bodies such as Universities Scotland, funding bodies, academics and the wider research communities, potential donors and dealers. Strategic, professional, developmental, service provision and administrative purposes apply throughout.

8. Knowledge, Skills and Experience Needed for the Job

An honours degree in an appropriate discipline and a recognised professional qualification or professional registration in a relevant branch of information management. The post-holder is likely to be a highly experienced information professional, skilled in collections management and development, and will also possess substantial senior management and administrative experience. There will be a record of policy and procedural development, and work planning in an academic or research environment. S/he must have had particular responsibility for Special Collections and Archives, including their electronic dimensions, and legal framework. Sound experience of project direction and management is also required, and there will be a proven track record in bidding processes and securing external funding. The post-holder also needs to have familiarity with the space planning and accommodation needs of unique resources and the services associated with them. Experience of managing change and working in partnership with academic colleagues is also highly desirable.

9. Dimensions

Line Manager for 6 (5 FTE) curatorial level first line reports, (the Special Collections Management Team) responsible for the security, care and preservation of the University’s extensive (17km) collections of rare books, manuscripts, archives and theses, plus services to users. The department handles over 15,000 visitors per year and several hundred ‘remote’ enquiries per month. There are also 16 indirect reports, and the job directly affects at least 8 other staff across Collections Division including the Director. More widely, the job affects the Library’s senior management team, managerial and technical staff in Digital Library Division and across IS, as well as a wide variety of University staff ranging from the Secretary to the University through academic staff to departmental administrators. There is responsibility for project budgets ranging from 10k-263k, (typically approx. 60k). The collections have an insured value of £100 million and are of immense national and international significance. They include many of the University’s greatest ‘treasures’ such as the unrivalled oriental and medieval manuscripts collections requested frequently for international exhibitions.

10. Job Context and any other relevant information

The post-holder is a key driver for further change and innovation, formulating policies and conceptualising the future configuration of services to ensure competitive edge in student recruitment and research activity through public facilities, project development, and improvements in digital asset management. The post-holder is a member of various strategic groups both within IS and beyond, for example, Scottish Executive consultee on FOI and public records legislation.