

Museums, Galleries & Heritage Careers

The heritage sector covers museums, science centres, heritage organisations, buildings, archaeology, archives and conservation. Find out what your options are, how to get your foot in the door and where to look for vacancies.

Opportunities in the sector



Types of employment:

There is no one path into a museums or heritage career. Lots of people start out in the sector through volunteering, and some continue to develop their skills and networks by volunteering even when they are employed. The heritage sector has become increasingly dependent on volunteers to maintain services, and volunteers become very professional and skilled. **Volunteering provides possibilities for you to gain experience while still at university and build essential networks.**

You might find work on a freelance basis or on a fixed term contract and, if you can manage the uncertainty of this kind of employment, these kinds of positions can be a route to a permanent full time position.

Heritage careers often start out very broad and then become more focused and specialised, but equally you might go the other way and begin in a very niche role.

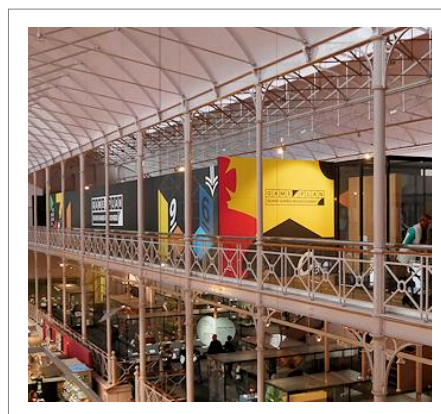
The kinds of skills you need in this sector can be developed in lots of other sectors, so **moving from, for example, a project management or events role in another industry to a similar role in a museum isn't unusual.** So don't be disheartened if you don't land your dream heritage role at first – there is plenty of time!

Job roles:

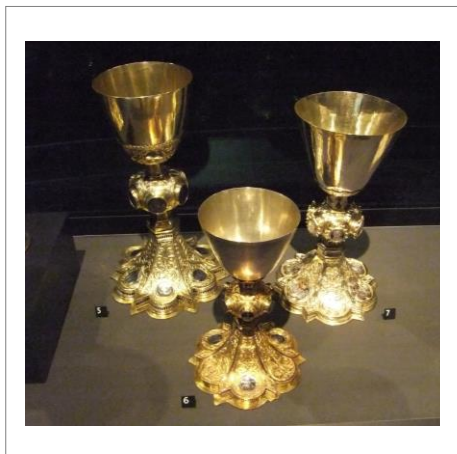
- **Curation** – overall responsibility for a collection of artefacts or works of art. They acquire, research, display and write about objects
 - **Collections** – managing objects, preserving documentation, cataloguing, storage, preventative care, lighting, digital recording
 - **Conservation** – making sure things are stable, safe and in good condition before being displayed or loaned. Often specialise in a type of object e.g. paintings or furniture
 - **Learning** – education, outreach, community events. Preparation and delivery of programmes, events and resources for schools and other visitors
 - **Exhibitions** – organising specific opportunities to display particular objects. Focused on project management, relationship building, partnership working. Works alongside the curator
 - **Visitor operations** – or visitor services, engaging with audiences and visitors, front of house, shop, events, café, duty/museum manager
- **Information/library/archives** – record and facilitate use of materials by the institution's clients
 - **Digital** – engaging audiences and making collections and stories accessible online
 - **Volunteer management** – organising volunteers and ensuring a positive experience
 - **Partnerships** - securing sponsorships and partnerships with a wide range of brands and companies to support the organisations work
 - **Science communication** – making scientific content understandable and accessible
 - **Research** - conducting research in scientific, cultural, historical, or artistic fields for use in projects
 - **Commercial** - selecting art/objects to both enhance the gallery/museum's reputation and bring in money
 - **Development - fundraising**

Plus, enabling roles that are found in lots of other industries too:

- International
- Consultancy
- Policy & advocacy
- Marketing
- HR
- Facilities and estate management
- Information communication
- Technology
- Finance
- Management / leadership



Collection and organisation types



Thinking about kinds of collections you want to work with can help you target your job hunt. You could consider:

- Archaeology
- Agriculture
- Art History
- Costume and textiles
- Decorative arts
- Ethnography
- Industrial
- Natural History
- Medical
- Military
- Science

It's also important to consider the different types of organisations in this sector, all with different funding, structures and primary purpose:

- **Nationals** – centrally-funded by the Dept. for Culture, Media & Sport
- **Local Authority Museums** – remit driven by particular areas in UK. Local councillors, elected members and communities have a say
- **Independents** – no national or local-authority funding so more commercial activity like publications and paid-for workshops
- **Regimental** – funded by Ministry of Defence. Sometimes “behind the wire” in barracks
- **University** – aim to support learning
- **Private** – privately-owned collections, can be owned by charities

It's worth noting that careers in **local and regional museums** can be just as fulfilling, easier to get into and, importantly, are not far behind some national museums in terms of pay.

Other places where there are opportunities:

- **Sector Bodies** – like the Museums Association
- **Suppliers** – e.g. collections management systems, auction houses, logistics specialists
- **Consultancies** – specific to the sector e.g. weareculture24.org.uk

List of national museums in the UK:

- British Museum, London
- Imperial War Museum, London, Cambridge and Manchester
- National Gallery, London
- National Maritime Museum, London
- World Museum, Liverpool
- Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool
- Merseyside Maritime Museum, Liverpool
- Seized! The Border and Customs uncovered, Liverpool
- International Slavery Museum, Liverpool
- Lady Lever Art Gallery, Liverpool
- Museum of Liverpool
- Science Museum, London
- Science and Industry Museum, Manchester
- National Railway Museum, York
- National Science and Media Museum, Bradford
- National Collections Centre, Swindon
- Locomotion, Shildon
- National Portrait Gallery, London
- National Army Museum, London
- National Coal Mining Museum for England, West Yorkshire
- Natural History Museum, London
- Royal Armouries, Leeds, London and Portsmouth
- Sir John Soane's Museum, London
- Tate, London, Liverpool and St. Ives
- Victoria and Albert Museum, London
- Wallace Collection, London

Q&A with Tamsin Russell from the Museums Association

 @TamsinRussell

Q: Should I do a Masters? Or even a PhD?

A: Not necessarily. Some organisations use MAs as a blunt shortlisting tool, so will require everyone to have one simply to cut down the number of applicants.

In some cases, the research skills and knowledge you develop doing an MA will be valuable (for example in some learning departments or when curating a collection where you have specialist knowledge), but in other places the practical skills you gain from volunteering and other work experience will be more highly regarded.

If you're planning to freelance in this sector an MA can help you define your particular unique selling points when going for opportunities. It's worth noting that there are many more people graduating with an MA in Museum Studies than there are jobs in the sector, so it's certainly not a guaranteed ticket to a job.

The same applies for PhDs. However, a PhD can be particularly valuable in collections-based institutions because they give an

opportunity to apply for funding from universities. It's also a badge of honour to have PhD level study if you're applying for a role where your PhD makes you a specialist in that niche.

Q: Where should I look for vacancies?

A: A key jobs website is the *Leicester University Museums Jobs Desk*, which is updated every Thursday. Lots of roles are advertised on social media, the *Museums Association* advertise vacancies too, and *MuseumsJobs.com* is also an important site. Look at local places where you would like to work, go to their websites, follow them on Twitter, and connect with/follow key people.

Q: What would the most common job titles be for a new grad?

A: Assistant Curator/ Curatorial Assistant, Collections Management Assistant, assistants on capital build /moving projects, Enablers/Explainers in Learning departments, Visitor Services roles.

Getting Connected

- Find subject specialist networks in the fields you're interested online and via social media, such as **@museumfreelance**, and the **Emerging Museum Professional UK group**, where you'll find networking opportunities, events and advice
- Find **volunteering** opportunities through the university volunteering team or through sites like do-it.org
- Get involved in online events to learn the language and issues relating to the industry, such as **Twitter's regular Museum Hour and Archive Hour**, plus try **@AskACurator** and **@MuseumNext**
- You can **join the Museums Association for £4.60 per month** which will give you access to online courses, webinars and articles
- Other websites/social media offer job listings online, latest industry news and careers advice. They include the **Archives and Records Association, the Association for Heritage Interpretation, the Collections Trust, Digital Culture Network, Engage, Front of House Museums, theheritagealliance.org.uk, Museums Crush and the BEFS Bulletin**
- Set **Google Alerts** on keywords that interest you such as "V&A Jobs" or "Tank Museum Volunteering" and receive emails when content containing these words appears online

Skills to Build

Each individual role will have its own set of skills, but common themes seen in job adverts for this sector include:

- Flexibility (particularly with fixed-term contracts)
- Creativity
- Excellent communication skills
- Genuine interest/'love' of art and culture
- Initiative and drive
- Evaluative skills
- Strong organisational skills

Use volunteering to prove that your enthusiasm is backed by experience and skills: sell tickets; organise publicity; work with customers; book outside performers; negotiate sponsorship; organise venues and transport; manage money and records.

Think laterally. Skills gained from other industries can provide you with transferable experience, especially when **coupled with relevant volunteering**. You could work for a specialist company that **"serves" the heritage sector** - consider *architects, printers, events companies, marketers, consultancies, packagers, conservators, insurers, trainers, recruiters* and many more.

Jobs Listings

MuseumJobs.com

<https://www.museumjobs.com/>

Jobsite for museums, galleries, libraries & archives.

Attractions Management

<http://www.attractionsmanagement.com/>

Industry portal focused on the global visitor attractions sector.

Arts Job Finder

<https://www.artspromotional.co.uk/jobs>

Arts and culture jobs (mainly arts focused).

Civil Service

<https://www.civil-service-careers.gov.uk/>

Many Government departments' activity affects the heritage sector.

Gallery Jobs

<http://www.gallery-jobs.org/>

Job vacancies in art galleries

Call for Curators

<https://callforcurators.com/>

Platform for international art curators

CharityJob

<https://www.charityjob.co.uk/jobs/arts-culture-heritage>

Charity, NGO & social enterprise focused recruitment.

Goodmoves

<https://goodmoves.com/>

Charity and voluntary sector jobs

Artsjobsonline

<https://www.artsjobsonline.com/>

Arts, culture and heritage jobs site.

Blooloop

<https://blooloop.com/>

Global attractions news, with relevant museums jobs.

Leicester University Museum Jobs Desk

<http://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/JobDesk>

Extensive vacancy listing collated by Leicester University's Department of Museum Studies.

NMDC (National Museum Directors Conference)

<http://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/jobs/>

Jobs across the UK's national and major regional museums, libraries and archives.

BAJR (British Archaeological Jobs Resource)

<http://www.bajr.org/Employment/>

Portal to employment, training and industry news, developed by David Connolly over many years.

CIfA Jobs bulletin (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists)

<http://www.archaeologists.net/jis>

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists produces a weekly jobs bulletin

IHBC Jobs etc (Institute for Historic Building Conservation)

<https://ihbconline.co.uk/jobsetc/>

The Institute for Historic Building Conservation jobs website

Museums Association

<http://www.museumsassociation.org/careers/find-a-job>

Museums-focused jobs listing.

Historic Houses

<https://www.historichouses.org/about/about-us/jobs.html>

Private historic houses jobs and opportunities.

ICON – Institute of Conservation

<https://icon.org.uk/about-us/conservation-jobs>

Conservation jobs (ICON membership required to access).

AIM – Association for Independent Museums

<https://www.aim-museums.co.uk/AIM>

Lists museum job vacancies on its website

GEM – Group for Education in Museums

<https://gem.org.uk/jobs/>

Education, interpretation and outreach focused jobs.

Arts Council – ArtsJobs

<http://www.artsjobs.org.uk/artsjobshome/>

Lists adverts for a range of job opportunities within arts and culture

Large Scale Heritage Organisations

A range of the larger heritage organisations, which operate multiple historic sites or large museum venues.

National Lottery Heritage Fund

<https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/about/jobs>

Formerly the Heritage Lottery Fund, gives grants to projects.

National Trust

<http://www.ntjobs.org.uk/>

Large scale charity looking after historic sites and landscapes in England, Wales & NI.

English Heritage

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/about/jobs/>

Charity looking after national portfolio of historic sites in England.

Historic England

<https://historicengland.org.uk/about/jobs/>

National heritage advisory body for England.

Historic Royal Palaces

<https://www.hrp.org.uk/about-us/work-for-us/>

Looks after various unoccupied Royal Palaces and buildings, mainly in London. *Summer opportunities are often available at Buckingham Palace via The Royal Household website*

British Museum

https://www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/jobs.aspx

National museum jobs.

Victoria & Albert Museum

<https://www.vam.ac.uk/vacancies>

National museum jobs.

Royal Collection Trust

<https://www.rct.uk/>

Part of the Royal Household, the Collection looks after the historic collections

Royal Parks

<https://www.royalparks.org.uk/getinvolved/careers>

Royal Parks in London jobs.

Academic opportunities

Individual Universities and Research Institutions advertise on their own websites, but most will also list their jobs on the main two academic jobs portals.

Jobs.ac.uk

<http://www.jobs.ac.uk>

Main UK academic jobs site for teaching & research positions, funded PhDs etc. Broad global coverage also.

THE (Times Higher Education) unijobs

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/unijobs/>

Research and teaching posts within Universities worldwide.

Career development resources

Various organisations within the sector and more widely in the careers field provide useful resources for thinking about career development, as well as specific skills required for specialised roles.

Prospects

<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/>

Careers guidance from the Higher Education Careers Services Unit.

Creative & Cultural Skills

<https://ccskills.org.uk/>

Careers and skills development for young people.

Oxford University Careers Service

<http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/artsheritage/>

Sector-specific information.

NHTG - National Heritage Training Group

<https://www.the-nhtg.org.uk/resources/heritage-directory/careers-in-heritage/>

NHTG co-ordinates the development and delivery of traditional building crafts training and qualifications in the heritage sector of the UK.

BAJR (British Archaeological Jobs & Resources) first job guide

<http://www.bajr.org/Employment/getajob.asp>

Useful information on thinking about CV, skills and developing experience in archaeology.

Diversity & Inclusion

Creative Access regularly lists vacancies within the museums and heritage sector which are open to those from under-represented groups:

<https://creativeaccess.org.uk/industry/museums-and-galleries/>

The Windsor Fellowship, in partnership with the National Lottery Heritage Fund, offers a 12 month internship programme providing a great way to gain paid work experience for individuals from communities that are currently underrepresented in the heritage sector.

<https://www.windsor-fellowship.org/heritage-fund-bame-internship>

The National Archives welcome applicants for their work experience programmes from students with autism.

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/jobs/>

To discuss your next steps in the museums/heritage sector book a careers appointment at careersportal.royalholloway.ac.uk

You can also connect with Royal Holloway alumni working in the sector on the Royal Holloway LinkedIn page.