

CONNECTING HISTORIES

Guide

How to Work in Heritage



The heritage sector is a growing area of work and includes a number of different specialisms and interesting opportunities. This page mainly deals with Archives but there are also a wide variety of career opportunities in Museums and other parts of the heritage sector (such as conservation, historic buildings, parks etc). This could involve working for organisations such as the National Trust or English Heritage for example. For information on these organisations see the links below.

Archives

Archives are a society's memory and come in many different formats from ancient parchment to film and electronic media. They are to be found in a number of organisations from local authority run record offices and libraries to museums, businesses, universities, media companies, charities, banks and government agencies.

Many of these organisations employ qualified archivists, paper conservators and support staff, such as archive assistants, to preserve and manage their archives and make them available for research and educational purposes. Some archive services also employ education and learning staff and outreach staff who make the collections available to schools and the wider community.

Diversity

A recent survey shows that of the employees currently working in the archive sector in the West Midlands, 98.5% are from a white British background and people with disabilities are also underrepresented.

The profile of the archives workforce in Birmingham itself, where some 30% of the population are from a black or ethnic 'minority' background, comes nowhere near reflecting this diversity.

To begin addressing this situation the *Connecting Histories* project includes two positive action training placements for black graduates to train and qualify as archivists to try and improve this situation.

It is hoped that this will act as a pilot to stimulate policy makers in national and regional agencies and other archive services to consider similar initiatives. This pilot was modelled on a similar scheme called *Diversify* which has been operating in the museum sector since 1998 and you will find information about that below.

Connecting Histories has also been providing taster sessions and volunteer opportunities for individuals to get a feel for what working in the archives and wider heritage sector entails and to enable people who are interested to get some relevant skills and experience – as jobs and training courses often ask for work based experience from applicants.

If you are based in Birmingham and are interested in taster sessions or voluntary work experience with archives e-mail lzzy.Mohammed@birmingham.gov.uk or telephone 0121 464 1607.

Information on careers in Archives, Museums and other Heritage careers

Information about careers in archives and downloads of leaflets on careers in archives, paper conservation, modern records management etc can be found at www.archives.org.uk/careerdevelopment in the Starting Out section.

For links to universities offering postgraduate qualifications in archives see www.archives.org.uk/careerdevelopment/startingout/postgraduatecourses

For information on the Museum Association's Diversify Scheme go to www.museumsassociation.org/diversify

For links to positive action training placements and other jobs in museums, libraries and archives in the West Midlands as they come up see <http://www.mlwestmidlands.org.uk/news/ealertnews/index.asp>

Job opportunities and training placements in archives and other parts of the heritage sector also often appear on the discussion list of the Black and Asian Studies Association and the Archives NRA discussion list. To join these lists go to www.jiscmail.ac.uk and find the lists in the index.

For information on English Heritage go to www.english-heritage.org.uk

For information on the National Trust see www.nationaltrust.org.uk

www.connectinghistories.org.uk

