

## **Senate House Library Volunteers Policy**

### **Introduction**

In support of widening access to and participation in higher education, and to support the development of individuals wishing to enter the information profession, Senate House Library, University of London is committed to providing appropriate opportunities for voluntary work with printed books, archival and manuscript, and artwork collections.

### **Examples of voluntary work opportunities**

Senate House Library has long encouraged voluntary work opportunities with collections for mutual benefit. These opportunities are offered subject to sufficient professional staff availability to offer appropriate supervision and training and with due regard, where appropriate, to security and confidentiality. Projects contribute to the remit of professional members of staff and neither substitute nor replace work which a qualified archivist, conservator or librarian would normally undertake. No remuneration is offered, but reasonable expenses may be reimbursed by agreement. Volunteers will be covered by the University's existing policies and insurance arrangements for staff. Examples of opportunities include and are not limited to the following:

- Short-term placements for students following a recognised course in archival administration, conservation or librarianship leading to a professional qualification; or in a related subject;
- Longer-term placements for individuals wishing to obtain experience prior to applying for and/or taking up a recognised course in archival administration, conservation or librarianship leading to a professional qualification;
- Longer-term arrangements for individuals interested in archives, manuscripts, conservation or librarianship, who wish to work on a discrete project or collection.

### **Status of volunteers**

A volunteer is not an employee and will not have a contract of employment with SHL. Senate House Library will agree a role with the volunteer and there will be an expectation that the volunteer will meet the role's requirements and that SHL will provide work for the volunteer. However, volunteers are able to refuse to fulfil the role and the SHL is not bound to provide the work. It is also expected that both the SHL and the volunteer will give as much notice as possible if unable to meet these expectations.

### **Volunteering roles**

Roles suitable for volunteers are identified by the Volunteer Coordinator, who will draw up a volunteer outline. This will set out the requirements of the role and the skills or experience needed, as well as any training that is required before the volunteering work is undertaken. Volunteers will not be used as substitutes for employees.

### **Examples of potential projects**

The nature of projects available for voluntary work varies according to priorities and resources in Senate House Library at any time, and it may not always be possible to offer a particular type of project. Examples of potential projects include and are not limited to the following:

- Preparation of basic box lists for archival and manuscript collections to provide preliminary finding aids as a precursor to sorting, appraisal, and archival cataloguing
- Basic sorting and catalogue checking of a collection of printed books, periodicals, pamphlets, etc.
- Assessing the rarity in academic libraries of collections of printed items and their research value to Senate House Library.
- Assistance with preparing information on archival, manuscript and printed collections for web pages.
- Labelling and relocating books and collections.

### **Applications for voluntary work opportunities**

A person wishing to become a volunteer will be asked to complete an application form online through the Senate House Library website. The applicant will be asked to identify areas in which he/she would like to volunteer. If SHL is able to match the applicant to a suitable role, references may be required.

Interested applicants should first consult the list of current opportunities on the Library's website, noting any specific skills listed as required. Preliminary contact should then be made with the Volunteer Coordinator, who will discuss the project and the possible volunteer role with the Library. Applicants may be asked for a brief CV and for the contact details of referees at this point. Non-UK applicants must also provide evidence that they are permitted to carry out voluntary work. Thereafter, an informal meeting will take place to discuss the potential volunteer's skills, interests, availability and the potential project in more detail.

At the satisfactory conclusion of this stage of the process, a recommendation will be made by the Volunteer Coordinator to the Collection Development Group that a voluntary work opportunity is offered, and formal University endorsement will be obtained by the Library. A Volunteer Agreement will be signed and these records will be kept on file in line with the University of London's record retention schedules.

### **Daily conduct of voluntary placements**

Volunteers will work consistently with a designated member of staff, and agree on a regular pattern of attendance, e.g., weekly, fortnightly, although this can clearly be varied to accommodate other commitments by prior arrangement. Volunteers are provided with training appropriate to the project they are undertaking and, depending on the nature of the work, access to systems, databases and other documents. They will be introduced to appropriate professional standards in operation and kept briefed on the contribution their project is making.

Volunteers will usually have informal meetings to review progress with the project owner at least once a month. Where the project is intended to continue on a medium- or longer-term basis, a more thorough review will be arranged after three months to reach mutual agreement to continue the arrangement. Such reviews ensure that project work is progressing in line with the expectations and requirements of both the Library and of the volunteer. On the very rare occasions that the performance of the volunteer does not meet the standard agreed, the Library reserves the right to terminate the arrangement, with due warning and a written explanation. Should the volunteer feel that they are not being adequately supported in their role, the Volunteer Coordinator will act as a first point of advice and assistance. On the successful completion of all projects, the Library will review achievements with the volunteer, and provide written feedback on the value of their contribution which they are free to share with prospective employers or other interested parties. In addition to this formal contact, all volunteers are

actively encouraged to liaise and network with staff members to increase their knowledge and awareness of the care and promotion of access to printed books, archives and manuscripts.

## **Health and safety**

The organisation has a responsibility for the health and safety of volunteers. Volunteers should at all times follow the organisation's health and safety policies and procedures. Volunteers have a duty to take care of themselves and others who might be affected by their actions. Volunteers should not act outside their authorised area or work. Volunteers should report all accidents to their supervisor.

The organisation will provide volunteers with appropriate guidance on any health and safety issues that arise.

## **Recompense**

Volunteers are unpaid. However, the organisation will reimburse volunteers for travel and subsistence expenses. This will entail reimbursement against receipts. Reimbursement will be in accordance with the organisation's expenses policy.

## **Policies and procedures**

Volunteers are expected to comply with all the organisation's policies while they are on its premises or undertaking any of their volunteering duties. Their induction will include an explanation of these policies and procedures.

## **Insurance**

The organisation will ensure that volunteers are covered for insurance purposes in respect of personal injury. The organisation will also ensure that volunteers are provided with professional and public liability insurance. The insurance will not cover unauthorised actions or actions outside the volunteering agreement.

## **Confidentiality**

Volunteers are likely to become aware of confidential information about the organisation, its staff, customers and suppliers. Volunteers should not disclose this information or use it for their own or another's benefit without the consent of the party concerned. This does not prevent disclosure once the information is in the public domain (unless it has been made public as a result of the volunteer's breach of confidentiality) or where the law permits or requires disclosure.

## **Supervision**

The Volunteer Coordinator will support and manage volunteers, and will review the arrangements for each volunteer on a regular basis. If the volunteer has any queries or would like to change his/her role this should be discussed with the Volunteer Coordinator.

## **Dealing with problems**

The Volunteer Coordinator will normally try to solve any problems informally, but if this is not possible the formal complaints system will come into operation.

If the volunteer wishes to make a formal complaint, he/she should put the complaint in writing to the Volunteer Coordinator. If it is not possible to reach a solution the volunteer may raise the matter with the Volunteer Coordinator's manager.

If a complaint is made about a volunteer, this will be notified to him/her in writing and the Volunteer Coordinator will decide whether any action should be taken. If the volunteer is dissatisfied with the decision, he/she may raise it with the Volunteer Coordinator's manager.

## **Equality and Diversity**

The University of London is committed to a comprehensive policy of equal opportunities. Full information on the University's equality and diversity policies is available from the University of London website at <https://www.london.ac.uk/about/equality-diversity-inclusion>

## **Volunteer's pack**

On commencing his/her volunteer work, the volunteer will be given a pack containing:

- general information about the SHL and the University of London;
- a copy of this volunteering policy;
- a standard volunteering agreement; and
- details of where he/she can access the organisation's policies and procedures.

Human Resources  
November 2024