University of Kent

Special Collections & Archives

Volunteer Policy

February 2022

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| 0.1 | Draft | Initial draft | Elspeth Millar | 18/APR/2018 |
| 0.2 | Draft | Feedback from JB, KB, TK, Alan Martin | Elspeth Millar | 30/APR/2018 |
| 0.3 | Draft | Feedback from Chris Morrison and IS Finance | Elspeth Millar | 01/MAY/2018 |
| 0.4 | Draft | Feedback from TT | Elspeth Millar | 01/AUG/2018 |
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**Introduction**

Special Collections & Archives (SC&A) manages the University of Kent’s unique and distinctive collections so that they are preserved and accessible for the benefit of teaching, scholarship and society. Informed by the Institutional and Information Services Strategic Plans, Special Collections & Archives provides strategic direction to maximise the use, value and legacy of these collections.

**Principles**

We follow the NCVO definition of volunteering as “any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives. Central to this definition is the fact that volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual”[[1]](#footnote-1).

**Why we need volunteers**

We offer volunteering opportunities for University of Kent students and the wider public, so that they can develop workplace skills whilst altruistically supporting our activities.

Volunteers in Special Collections & Archives make valuable contributions through listing (of uncatalogued collections), which improves discoverability and access to our collections, and through collection care work such as repackaging and cleaning work, which contributes to the long-term preservation of our collections. This work may be carried out in person on the Canterbury campus, or remotely using online tools.

SC&A offers a number of volunteering opportunities, including:

* Short-term intensive placements for University of Kent students seeking an internship in a professional service environment.
* Longer-term placements (initially termly, 12 weeks, but can be ongoing) for those seeking experience within an archive, library or heritage environment, with the intention of applying for a recognised course in archives and records management, or librarianship leading to a professional qualification.
* Long-term placements for individuals (including retired University of Kent staff members) interested in archive, library or heritage work.

The University of Kent is committed to the creation and support of a balanced, inclusive and diverse community. Information Services established the Information Services Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Group (IS-EDIG) to proactively support and advance the Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) agenda within the department and in support of the University’s institutional strategic plan. SC&A welcomes the opportunity to promote diversity in our collections and users through the work of volunteers, and actively works with the IS-EDIG to improve our support for EDI.

**Recruitment and selection**

Potential volunteers are welcome to approach Special Collections & Archives for possible volunteer placements. In addition, Special Collections & Archives will also advertise for volunteer placements for specific projects within the University via the Kent Union and through academic contacts.

Special Collections & Archives asks potential volunteers to send a CV and covering letter/email outlining their reasons for seeking a volunteer placement with SC&A and specific areas of work they are interested in or particular skills they are seeking. Individuals will be invited for an introductory conversation to discuss potential roles, a tour of the archive and working areas, and to meet the team. SC&A reserves the right not to accept a volunteer applicant.

**Induction and training**

Volunteers will be provided with an induction and specific training depending on their volunteer task. Whenever possible volunteers will be able to attend training sessions that will allow them to develop their role and enhance skills.

**Possible tasks**

There are a variety of tasks which volunteers can undertake with the Special Collections & Archives team, both in person or remotely. Tasks include:

* Listing archive, cartoon artwork and book items
* Re-packaging archive and cartoon artwork items
* Surface cleaning of book collections
* Summarising digitised audiovisual archive recordings
* Making collection inventories
* Reshelving work / archive strongroom consolidation work[[2]](#footnote-2)

The normal expectation of volunteers is for them to commit to one three hour shift (9am-12pm or 2pm-5pm) per week.

**Supervision and support**

Overall responsibility for volunteer management lies with the Special Collections & Archives Manager, although it is the University Archivist, Digital Archivist, and Senior Library Assistant (Special Collections) who supervise volunteers and who are the main point of contact during the volunteer placement.

Staff managing volunteers are suitably qualified and provided with guidelines. Volunteers are provided with a Volunteer Agreement and role description before they start, their contribution is monitored on a timesheet (virtually or on paper depending on the role).

Supervision is part of the support SC&A offers to its volunteers, and provides an opportunity for constructive feedback and monitoring. Independent projects, such as audio summarising and listing, will require less direct supervision, although the standard and accuracy of the work will need monitoring. Group projects (such as surface book cleaning, reshelving) will require constant staff supervision (3 hours per week per group).

**Ending volunteering**

Both the volunteer and Special Collections & Archives have the right to terminate the Volunteer Agreement at any time.

**Equipment and facilities**

Volunteers will be provided with all the equipment they will require for their task. Volunteers requiring access to a PC will be provided with a temporary visitor IT account. There is currently no facilities for a visitor pass for the Library, although SC&A volunteers can have access to a volunteer pass, which allows access to the SC&A office and reading room, for their session.

Volunteers will either work in the SC&A office, reading room or archive strong rooms. Lockers are available for storing belongings.

Food and drink are not permitted in any of the areas where volunteers work. Volunteers will be shown the facilities for purchasing hot beverages (the Library café and vending machines), and encouraged to take a break whilst completing their volunteer shift.

**Expectations**

Special Collections & Archives will:

* Treat volunteers with respect and courtesy
* Introduce volunteers to how SC&A works and how their voluntary role fits within it
* Provide proper introductory training to the work they will be undertaking
* Provide volunteers with a safe workplace and the equipment needed for them to do their work
* Provide any training that volunteers need in order to complete any of the projects within their role
* Respect volunteers’ skills, dignity and individual wishes and to do our best to meet them
* Deliver any materials or support on time
* Provide information regarding a volunteer’s role in a timely manner
* Offer opportunities to feedback and comment on work undertaken
* Provide an expression of experience for a CV on request

SC&A expects volunteers to:

* Treat others with respect and courtesy
* Perform their volunteering role to the best of their ability
* Work as directed by supervisors and Special Collections & Archives staff
* Undertake the activities outlined in their volunteer role description
* Respond to our emails within a reasonable timeframe
* Attend on time, or to give at least 24 hours’ notice to cancel or rearrange shifts or meetings with staff
* Let us know of any problems or difficulties they experience during their volunteering role
* Attend training offered for their volunteering role
* Let us know about any support or materials they may need from us within a reasonable amount of time
* Follow Information Services policies and procedures, including Health & Safety and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
* Respect the confidentiality of any information/data which you may have access to through your volunteer placement
* Sign a Volunteer Agreement (see Appendix 1)
* Assign all copyright in work they produce or create on behalf of SC&A to the University of Kent

**Health and safety**

The University of Kent has a responsibility for the health and safety of its volunteers. Volunteers will be provided with a copy of the Information Services Health & Safety guidelines.

The University of Kent’s insurance covers Special Collections & Archives volunteers. When a new volunteer joins the SC&A team provide the University’s Insurance Officer with the name and year of birth of the volunteer.

**Grievances**

Special Collections & Archives will try to resolve fairly any grievances or difficulties volunteers may have whilst on their placement. Volunteers should raise any problems with their supervisor initially, but should refer any unresolved issues to the Special Collections & Archives Manager.

**Expenses**

Volunteers who drive to the University can be issued with temporary electronic parking permits, subject to agreement with the SC&A Manager and Information Services Finance team.

**Copyright**

Volunteers will create work that may be protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, for example digitisation of collection items and creation of metadata records. Unless otherwise agreed the University of Kent owns all intellectual property rights in volunteer work in order to support its mission of preserving and making its collections available.

**Confidentiality and Data Protection**

Volunteers may have privileged access to confidential information and irreplaceable archive and book items. Volunteers are asked to accept responsibility to maintain the confidentiality of any information.

Volunteer personal contact details will be retained for administrative reasons whilst an individual is volunteering with SC&A, and these details kept secure from unauthorised access. All staff in SC&A will have undertaken the University of Kent’s e-learning module for Data Protection (GDPR). Contact details, and records of volunteering, will be retained for three years after the volunteer has left the service, to ensure that staff can provide future references.

**References**

Special Collections & Archives is able to provide references for volunteers after undertaking a volunteer placement (minimum of 12 weeks). References need to follow the template reference recommended by the University of Kent’s HR team, with a statement of the volunteer’s roles and responsibilities, rather than a form provided by the company asking for a reference.

**Volunteer Agreement**

This Volunteer Agreement describes the arrangement between University of Kent Special Collections & Archives and you. We are grateful for the volunteering work you will be doing with us and we will do the best we can to make the experience of volunteering with us as pleasurable and rewarding as possible. This agreement explains to you what you can expect from us in your volunteering experience and what we hope from you.  
  
**We expect you**:

* To treat others with respect and courtesy
* To perform your volunteering role to the best of your ability
* To work as directed by supervisors and Special Collections & Archives staff
* To undertake the activities outlined in your volunteer role description
* To respond to our emails within a reasonable timeframe
* To attend on time, or to give at least 24 hours’ notice to cancel or rearrange shifts or meetings with staff
* To let us know of any problems or difficulties you experience during your volunteering role
* To attend training offered for your volunteering role
* To let us know about any support or materials you may need from us within a reasonable amount of time
* To follow Information Services policies and procedures, including Health & Safety and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
* Respect the confidentiality of any information/data which you may have access to through your volunteer placement
* Sign a Volunteer Agreement

As a volunteer you will create work that may be protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, for example digitisation of collection items and creation of metadata records. Unless otherwise agreed the University of Kent owns all intellectual property rights in your volunteer work in order to support its mission of preserving and making its collections available.

**Special Collections & Archives will**:

* Treat you with respect and courtesy
* Introduce you to how the archive works and how your voluntary role fits within it
* Provide proper introductory training to the work you will be undertaking
* Provide you with a safe workplace and the equipment needed for you to do your work
* Provide any training that you need in order to complete any of the projects within your role
* Respect your skills, dignity and individual wishes and to do our best to meet them
* Deliver any materials or support on time, as agreed with you
* Provide information regarding your role in a timely manner
* Offer opportunities to feedback and comment on work undertaken
* Provide an expression of experience for a CV on request

**Please Note**: This Volunteer Agreement is not intended to be a legally binding contract between us. Neither of us intends any employment relationship to be created either now or at any time in the future.

Name…………………………………………Signed:…………………………………………………Date:………………………………

Emergency contact name…………………………………Emergency contact number……………………………………

Year of birth: ………………………………… Pronouns: …………………………………

Volunteer personal contact details will be retained for administrative reasons whilst an individual is volunteering with SC&A, and these details kept secure from unauthorised access. All staff in SC&A will have undertaken the University of Kent’s e-learning module for Data Protection (GDPR). Contact details, and records of volunteering, will be retained for three years after the volunteer has left the service, to ensure that staff can provide future references.

**Volunteers in Special Collections & Archives**

Special Collections & Archives at Kent include materials from 16th to 21st centuries spanning a wide range of topics from cartoons to theatre to local history. We are committed to sharing these unique and rare materials with the community and appreciate the role of volunteers in helping us with this mission.

In addition, we aim to provide opportunities with the collections which enable our volunteers to develop themselves, their understanding of historic and rare archival items and to gain an interest in their work.

**Volunteer Role: Collections Care of Special Collections & Archives**

**We are looking for 1 volunteer to undertake cleaning, arranging and adding metadata to a collection of photographic slides from the 1960’s.**

**Role Purpose:**

These posts offer an opportunity to get experience of handling an unusual format in the collections, under the supervision of staff, and learn about collections care, metadata and archival arrangement. The volunteer will be trained in how to handle materials, and record information about them on a spreadsheet. There will also be opportunities to learn about how to undertake basic preservation of materials.

This role is primarily desk-based, and it would be anticipated that the volunteer would be working in 3 hour shifts.

**Role & Responsibilities**

* Cleaning of 35mm slides using conservation brushes
* Checking the numbering system of the slides from rapid digitisation
* Rescanning slides which were missed in initial scanning
* Adding information about the slides to a spreadsheet- using archive cataloguing standards
* Transferring spreadsheet information to Collections Management Software CALM approximately once every 3-4 weeks
* Seek advice or guidance whenever necessary
* Adhering to health and safety advice given by supervisors
* Attending regularly for each 3 hour session, or notifying designated contact with as much notice as possible if you are unable to attend
* Following the procedures and rules of the University and Information Services
* To maintain the confidential information of the organisation.

**Responsible to:** Special Collections& Archives staff or designated supervisor

**Working With:** You will be working independently on the slide reconciliation project, with guidance and support from Archive staff. In addition, you will be able to feedback and discuss any concerns with members of the Special Collections Team.

**Duration:** Autumn term

**Training:** You will receive induction training run by Special Collections & Archive staff, including full training on equipment and skills to undertake this work from supervising staff.

Additional training for members of the University community is offered through the Stand Out programme which can be accessed at [www.kentunion.co.uk](http://www.kentunion.co.uk).

**Benefits:**

* Develop skills in collections care and cataloguing
* Develop new skills, such as communication and teamwork ([www.kentunion.co.uk/eandv/toolkit](http://www.kentunion.co.uk/eandv/toolkit) for more information about employability skills and how you can record these)
* Use your role to log time towards the Kent Student Certificate in Volunteering Award [KSCV] [www.kentunion.co.uk/eandv](http://www.kentunion.co.uk/eandv)
* Network and meet new people
* Gain experience of work with archive material
* Make a positive difference to the unique collections held at the University of Kent
* Assist in making Kent’s rare and unique collections available to the wider community

**Volunteer Agreement**

A separate Volunteer Agreement will be provided to all volunteers to ensure clarity of duties and expectations, as well as what Special Collections & Archives will provide to you.

**Available Support**

All volunteers will be provided with support from their supervisors and the Special Collections & Archives team. In addition, Kent Union has a dedicated team to support volunteer roles.

1. National Council For Voluntary Organisations, <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/policy-and-research/volunteering-policy>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. If working in the archive strongrooms volunteers will be constantly supervised by a member of staff. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)