

Museum Job Descriptions

It takes many, many people to run a museum. Here are some of the museum jobs people do, and some of the skills it takes to be good at that job. What job would you like best? Which one would you be good at?

Director

- In charge of the whole museum and its workings: manages finance and exhibition agenda
- Represents the museum in contacts with the public
- Works with the entire staff to make sure museum runs smoothly
- Skills: enjoy working with people, flexible and organized worker; comfortable public speaker, enjoy doing a variety of different things, good problem-solver
- You could be a Director if you are very good at persuading all kinds of different people to work together.

Curator

- Expert often in charge of one type of the collection (drawings, paintings, Egyptian objects, etc.)
- Develops exhibitions supervising the display and information about the objects in their areas
- Oversees the care and acquisition of objects for the collection
- Writes and coordinates publication of museum catalogs
- Skills: good writer, enjoys reading and researching
- You could be a Curator if you love art, research, and writing.

Registrar/Collections Manager

- Keeps track of all museum objects and maintains records of ownership and borrowing
- Carefully watches the safety and condition of objects on display
- Manages requests for rights and reproduction of images
- Skills: organizational skills, good record keeper, careful with details
- You could be a Registrar if you are good at keeping things in your desk and your room very neat and organized.

Museum Educator

- Plans tours and other programs for museum visitors of all ages
- Works with the Curators to develop exhibits
- Oversees volunteers (docents, gallery guides, etc.)
- Skills: good writer, creative, good with people
- You could be a Museum Educator if you love sharing new ideas and information with lots of different types of people.

Development Officer

- In charge of raising the money necessary to running the museum by contacting individuals, businesses, government agencies and charitable foundations.
- Writes regular updates and reports to donors
- Plans and attends activities and events to foster donor relationships
- Skills: excellent communicator both in writing and in person, likes travel and interacting with many kinds of people
- You could be a Development Officer if you feel comfortable talking to people about money.

Public Relations

- Writes and distributes press releases and announcements to inform the community about events and activities at the museum
- Develops website and social media strategies to promote the museum
- Contacts local television stations, newspapers, and bloggers with information about the museum
- Works with designers to create posters, brochures, and advertisements
- Skills: good vocabulary, creative writer, comfortable public speaker
- You could be a Public Relations Officer if you are creative with words and are good at public speaking.

Exhibit Designer

- Plans layout and display of objects in the space provided for the museum
- Works with curators to decide on wall colors and arrangements of objects to tell the best story
- Helps Preparators to hang and install artwork properly
- Skills: creative with colors and space, good at math
- You could be an Exhibit Designer if you enjoy math and creative problem-solving with shapes and space.

Preparator

- Assist the Exhibit Designers in the installation of the museum's objects
- Carefully handles objects
- Helps to construct and arrange displays
- Skills: good with math, enjoy building things, good sense of space, very careful with details
- You could be a Preparator if you enjoy math and are good at working with your hands.

Museum Shop Manager

- Runs the museum gift shop, which sells postcards and other small souvenirs
- Arranges and displays the merchandise for easy shopping
- Handles money and helps visitors to the museum shop
- In charge of other shop clerks
- Skills: good with people, enjoys math and money counting, good organizational skills
- You could be a Museum Shop Manager if you like meeting people and working with money.

Museum Protection Staff (Security Officers)

- In charge of safety for all museum objects and visitors
- Ensures that all museum rules are followed
- Assists visitors with questions
- Stationed throughout the museum during visiting hours
- Skills: knowledge of rules, good with people
- You could be on the Museum Protection Staff if you recognize the importance of following rules and enjoy dealing with all kinds of people.

Other museum jobs:

- Business Officer – in charge of the museum's financial affairs such as making sure bills are paid on time, keeping the museum's expenses from exceeding income, and paying staff their salaries.
- Membership Officer – in charge of the museum's membership programs, aimed at individuals and companies who pay a yearly fee to enjoy special benefits from their support of the museum.
- Building and Grounds Staff – in charge of maintaining the building and grounds of the museum in good condition, including repairing walls and roofs, mowing lawns, cleaning floors and clearing ice and snow.
- Docent/Gallery Guide (generally unpaid, volunteer positions): guides and teaches visitors on tours of the museum
- Graphic Designer: designs signage, posters, brochures, and catalogues
- Librarian – in charge of the museum's library of books and historical archives
- Imaging Expert– in charge of the museum's image library, photography of objects, and rights and reproductions

Adapted from: <http://mag.rochester.edu/plugins/acrobat/teachers/MuseumCareers.pdf>

Learn more about jobs in museums:

American Alliance of Museums (AAM): <http://www.aam-us.org>

Careers for art historians: <http://www.nd.edu/~crosenbe/jobs.html>

Museum Careers information from the Smithsonian: <http://museumstudies.si.edu/careers.html>

Places where museum jobs are posted:

American Alliance of Museums (AAM): <http://www.aam-us.org>

Museum Employment Resource Center (MERC): <http://www.museum-employment.com/>

Museum Jobs Online (includes internships): <http://www.museumjobsonline.com/MJO>

Information for students at the Nasher Museum: nasher.duke.edu/students

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