

HISTORY MUSEUM CONSERVATOR

This is specialized and professional work in examining and preserving historical artifacts for use in a museum of history or house museum complex. Employees are responsible for researching, analyzing, restoring and developing guidelines for the conservation and stabilization treatment of artifacts. Items include garments, quilts, coverlets, wood, bone, leather and other organic materials; furniture, glass, pottery, iron, brass, copper, nickel, tin, lead and equipment. Employees assist with the acquisition, storage and exhibition of artifacts. Inspections are provided during processes of artifact acquisitions, loans and travel. Employees may supervise other staff or volunteers in the routine cleaning and maintenance of artifacts and oversee contractual conservators as required. Employees provide training in conservation awareness, proper care and handling of collection objects to designated staff and others. Work includes day to day laboratory maintenance including safety, supplies, equipment and cleanliness. Employees report to a curator or higher level administrator and perform related duties as required.

DIFFICULTY OF WORK:

Variety and Scope – Duties vary according to treatments required. Employees develop and document a conservation plan for each artifact and are guided in the work process by professional standards, technical manuals and resulting experimentation.

Intricacy – Work requires the ability to assess and determine what treatment or process to implement. Employees prepare and maintain systematic technical data in order to verify the value of treatment used.

Subject Matter Complexity – Work requires a knowledge and understanding of the program area and the methods, chemicals, supplies and techniques associated with preserving historical artifacts. Technical and creative skills are needed when treating various items.

Guidelines – Guidelines include procedures established by the American Institute of Conservation (AIC) and standards, procedures, rules and regulations established by the house museum, division or department. Other applicable state and federal regulations are observed.

RESPONSIBILITY:

Nature of Instructions – Daily work activities are performed independently and evaluated periodically for overall performance. Employees receive general instructions and scheduling details for projects and long-term plans.

Nature of Review – Independence is exercised in daily activities. Work is evaluated periodically for overall performance through reports and observation. Some technical review may be provided over key functions.

Scope of Decisions – Employees make decisions regarding the conservation and preservation of historical artifacts. Decisions may affect the credibility of the work unit, individuals and organizations that collaborate with the museum.

Consequence of Decisions – Unsafe use of chemicals, supplies or equipment could cause injury. Improper handling and treatment methods could cause damage to valuable and irreplaceable artifacts. The dissemination of incorrect information could result in the loss of credibility for the museum and loss of donations.

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS:

Scope of Contacts – Contacts are primarily with museum staff, other departmental staff, professional groups and individuals. Employees also work with the public answering questions typically regarding conservation and preservation.

Nature and Purpose – Contacts are primarily to interpret, advise, relay and exchange information regarding the research, conservation and stabilization treatment of artifacts.

OTHER WORK DEMANDS:

Work Conditions – Work takes place in a museum setting that includes working in a laboratory environment, storage facility and exhibit area.

Hazards – Improper use of tools, equipment and supplies could result in immediate physical harm. Injury could also result from the mishandling of artifacts. Occasional travel may be required.

RECRUITMENT STANDARDS:

Knowledges, Skills and Abilities – Thorough knowledge of conservation theories and techniques. Knowledge of organic and inorganic chemistry. Ability to plan and execute treatment on a variety of museum artifacts composed of varied compositions. Skill in handling and operating conservation laboratory equipment, metalworking and carpentry related tools. Knowledge of the American Institute of Conservation (AIC) code of ethics and standards for professional practices pertaining to the preservation of historic fine arts and decorative arts collections. Ability to work independently without direct supervision. Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with others. Excellent written and oral communication skills are required.

Minimum Training and Experience Requirements – A master's degree in museum conservation, textiles or museum studies which include courses in chemistry, textile or object conservation and one-year of experience related to the conservation of various metals, alloys, woods, textiles and leathers; or an equivalent combination of training and experience.

Special Note - This is a generalized representation of positions in this class and is not intended to identify essential functions per ADA. Examples of work are primarily essential functions of the majority of positions in this class but may not be applicable to all positions.