

# Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings

## JOB DESCRIPTION

### OUTLINE

<b>Job Title:</b>	Archive Officer
<b>Hours:</b>	2 days / week Fixed-term contract – 2 years  Occasional evening or weekend working may be required, for which time off in lieu will be given.
<b>Location:</b>	The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings 37 Spital Square, London, E1 9DY  Occasional visits to the archive ‘cold store’ in Lincolnshire, or other locations, may be required.
<b>Salary:</b>	£26,000 (pro rata) & contributory pension
<b>Annual Leave:</b>	20 days (pro rata)
<b>Department:</b>	Education & Training
<b>Responsible to:</b>	Education & Training Manager
<b>Reporting to:</b>	Education & Training Committee (ETC) and Archive Steering Group (ASG)
<b>Key relationships:</b>	Director; Casework, Communications and Development teams; IT Officer; Office Manager

---

### ROLE DESCRIPTION

#### Introduction – The SPAB

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) is the UK’s oldest buildings conservation charity, founded in 1877 by the artist, writer and campaigner William Morris. Today, it is a statutory adviser in the planning system, a campaigning organisation, a provider of training and expert technical advice, and a membership organisation with a network of regional groups which arrange a programme of events around the country. It has branches in Scotland and Ireland, and a section dedicated to the protection and use of historic wind- and watermills.

The SPAB has 30 full- and part-time staff, many of whom work from the Society’s headquarters - a Georgian townhouse in Spitalfields - with others home-based

around the country. Staff are supported by expert committees and a number of dedicated volunteers. More information about the Society and its work can be found at: <https://www.spab.org.uk/>

### **Overview – The SPAB Archive**

The SPAB keeps an archive of historic files, largely derived from its buildings casework and campaigning activities since the Society's foundation, but also including material on membership, funding, grants, education, publications, advice, buildings owned by the SPAB and other activities. The archive predominantly comprises paper records (reports and correspondence), but also contains notebooks, printed material, photographs, slides, albums and architectural drawings. The SPAB welcomes researchers and others with an interest in historic building conservation to view archive material at its HQ by appointment.

Most historic material relating to the Society's Mills Section is deposited at the Mills Archive in Reading. A small amount of infrequently-accessed SPAB archive material is kept in 'cold store' off site. At its HQ, the SPAB also keeps a modest library of books and periodicals, largely used by the Society's staff and committee members for reference.

The Archive Officer will be a member of the Education and Training team, but will liaise with other teams in order to perform their duties effectively. The post holder will also work closely with a small number of dedicated volunteers, who assist with archive tasks such as research, answering enquiries and cataloguing.

### **Purpose of the role:**

To enable access to archive information and documents in line with good stewardship of historic archive material; to raise awareness and understanding of the archive inside and outside the SPAB and contribute to planning for its future. The SPAB envisages carrying out a digitisation and access project in the longer term. The post-holder will contribute to work to develop this project, and a key element of the newly-created Archive Officer role will be to develop, create and maintain a comprehensive catalogue for the archive as a first step towards its better management and wider use.

## **PRINCIPAL DUTIES**

### **Operational:**

#### Researcher Enquiries

- Recording and responding to enquiries about archive content from the SPAB's staff and members, and from external researchers and other enquirers. This will involve researching in the archive and providing information in an appropriate format.
- Arranging appointments for external researchers and other archive visitors; preparing material for researchers' use; and supervising researchers on site.

#### Other

- Managing the archive volunteers and developing volunteering opportunities (e.g. in cataloguing, conservation, research and enquiries).
- Day-to-day responsibility for the archive store and its contents, and for other archive

material shelved separately. This embraces ongoing environmental monitoring; security; identifying conservation needs and priorities; checking material out of and back into the store; organising and maintaining appropriate shelving arrangements; observing and ensuring good practice in document handling and adherence to data protection requirements by all users; and accessioning new material into the archive. These responsibilities will require the post-holder to access shelving at various heights; manual handling of boxed and crated material in the basement archive store and around the building, and handling of large and fragile items.

- Drawing up and periodically reviewing / updating policies for the effective management and development of the archive. The Archive Officer will also contribute to the SPAB's business continuity planning with regard to the archive (e.g. Archive Disaster Management Plan).
- Recording and processing requests for loans or reproduction of archive material.
- Working with the consultant Librarian to ensure continued progress with cataloguing, stock maintenance and development of the SPAB library.
- Maintaining and updating the SPAB Archive page on the Society's website and archive resources in the Members' Area. (Content management system training will be given.)
- Supporting the Communications and Development teams in creative use of archive material across all areas of the SPAB's work. Devising and implementing engaging new ways of connecting people inside and outside the SPAB with its historic archive.

### **Development:**

#### New archive catalogue

- Developing, implementing and maintaining a comprehensive catalogue for the archive. This will include:
  - reviewing existing archive catalogues and shelf guides,
  - checking stock and reconciling material with existing finding aids,
  - liaising with the Casework and Education teams to identify - and draw up proposals to integrate - as-yet uncatalogued archive material,
  - liaising with the IT Officer to establish an appropriate cataloguing method, and to identify, specify and commission a system and IT package that will deliver a comprehensive catalogue for the SPAB Archive.
  - liaising with the Education & Training Manager and the Development Manager, to determine cataloguing project costs and to support the preparation of applications for external funding as necessary.
  - carrying out cataloguing, with the assistance of volunteers where appropriate.
- Development work towards the planned archive digitisation and access project.

### **Other Duties:**

- Occasional contributions to the SPAB quarterly magazine for members.
- Occasional contributions to SPAB member events and other activities (such as London Open House, or talks for visiting groups).

## **PERSON SPECIFICATION**

### **Essential:**

- The post holder will be a qualified Archivist, holding a post-graduate qualification recognised by the Archives and Records Association (ARA) or equivalent.
- At least two years' professional experience in an archive or heritage environment, participating in management of the resource and delivery of a service to users.
- Familiarity with current standards and established good practice in cataloguing, caring for and using archive material, and in data protection requirements.
- IT literacy and demonstrable experience in using office programmes and electronic cataloguing systems.
- Demonstrable presentation and writing skills.
- Good interpersonal skills and ability to work with a range of colleagues and volunteers across a small but busy organisation.
- Well organised and self-motivated; able to manage and prioritise diverse tasks.
- A strong interest in and sympathy with the ethos and activities of the SPAB.

### **Desirable:**

- Previous experience of specifying or carrying out cataloguing of an archive collection and / or other small scale project management.
- Understanding of funding sources for heritage collections.
- Familiarity with and interest in architecture and the development of historic buildings conservation from the late nineteenth century onwards.