

# Career Profiles: Education Officer

**Name: Skye Stevenson**

**Company: SPAB**

## **What first led to you considering a career in building conservation?**

I kind of fell into it really by way of other heritage roles and training.

## **What initial qualifications did you gain before starting your career?**

I am from South Africa, so studied there before coming to the UK. I completed a Bachelor of Social Science in History and Political Science. In my final year I was awarded a Fellowship to work/study in politics and with NGOs in Washington DC. However, when I returned to my studies after the Fellowship I decided that 'heritage' was the way for me to go - sort of a combination of both History and Politics! I then completed my post-graduate thesis in Heritage Studies (with formal modules in History, Museum Studies, Politics, Law and Environmental Studies).

## **Did you then undertake further qualifications?**

Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) - to teach History; English as a primary language; English as a second language.

Prince2 Project Management

UK Chartered Management Institute - Certificate in Management

## **Did you do any volunteering or work experience before gaining a paid role? If yes, how did this help you in establishing your career?**

My first work experience 'job' when I was 16 was at my local archives. While studying I volunteered for my local museum.

When I came to the UK I started volunteering in my spare time at the British Museum - first as a handling desk demonstrator, and then within the Family/Community Learning team. I volunteered at the British Museum for 9 years, while still working full-time in my various jobs - I only stopped when I had my son as I didn't have much spare time after that!

I think volunteering is a must for anyone trying to find their feet in the heritage world. It gives you the opportunity to learn about all the different roles within the sector, and provides networking opportunities. It also shows your passion for the sector even if you can't get a paid role!

## **What was your first paid role?**

During my post-graduate studies I worked as an historical researcher for my History professor. He also employed me as a tutor to his first year students. I also worked in shops and as a waitress during my student days!

After my studies, my first paid role was as a supply teacher in London.

## **What was the most challenging moment on your career path and how did you overcome this?**

Scarcity of jobs and thus not being able to get experience (hence my enthusiasm for volunteering) when I first started out.

Another challenge was when the UK recession hit - I was in a fantastic junior management role by that stage, but my role was made redundant and I battled to find work at this level (there only seemed to be opportunities for senior management or entry level jobs in the recession). I was unemployed for a year trying to find a full-time job. I was given some short-term freelance work which helped keep my career developing, but I would say that that junior management level of work has not really come back after the recession.

## **Did you volunteer at educational events as a means of gaining experience? Would you recommend this approach to those without a PGCE or relevant post graduate qualification?**

Yes, while at the British Museum I volunteered at their family events. I think any opportunity to work with children and young people will be good for someone who does not have a PGCE.