Queen's University Library Position Guide

Position Title: Conservator (Archivist)
Unit: Archives and Special Collections
Term: Limited-term appointment (up to 15-months)
Date: November 2026

Description

Located at Queen's University in Kingston, the Conservator reports to the University Archivist & Associate University Librarian. The Conservator is a Limited-term position that collaborates regularly with a team of archivists, librarians, and staff in the library's Archives and Special Collections (ASC) division.

The position also promotes and sustains a shared institutional vision for the library system including advancing common goals and committing to a learning organization philosophy of continuous staff development, engagement, and teamwork.

The Conservator plays a role in supporting the library's fundamental value of information access, stewardship and preservation, on a global scale for local needs, as well as the principle of enhancing learning and research through improved accessibility, presentation, and preservation.

The Conservator oversees the preservation and conservation program for Archives and Special Collections focusing on addressing the inherent and ongoing needs in the substantial, significant, rare, and unique collections, while providing advisory services to the library system. The Conservator manages two service points responsible for assessing, preserving, and conserving collections stored across three campus buildings. In addition, the Conservator carries out conservation treatment procedures of archival and library material, particularly paper and rare book conservation, employing specialized techniques to restore, repair and conserve such items.

Summary of Duties

- Oversees the operations and maintenance of two conservation laboratories, including the observance of health and safety standards.
- Supervises all activities of the Senior Conservation Technician.
- Provides guidance for all preventive conservation duties performed by members of the Archives and Special Collections division, including the Senior Archives Processing Technician.

- Determines and provides guidance regarding preventive conservation and preservation measures, including issues relating to access, handling, housing, storage, object installation and de-installation, exhibition mounting, packing, and transit.
- Assesses and documents the condition of material(s) going out on loan.
- Interprets environmental data for three collection storage locations and conducts risk assessments, as needed. Communicates findings to the University Archivist and Associate University Librarian.
- Assesses and documents the materials and condition of objects, including using written descriptions, photographic recording, and instrumental analysis.
- Proposes interventive conservation treatment where appropriate. Consults with appropriate archivist, librarian or Curator of Rare Books and Special Collections and obtains authorization for specific conservation treatments, as appropriate to their priorities and the needs of the item(s). Determines, designs, and carries out approved interventive conservation treatments. Documents such treatments.
- Develops and provides training and information for a wide variety of library and archives staff, and members of the public regarding the practice of conservation and the materiality of objects.
- Provides guidance and specific instruction to a variety of staff involved in acquiring, storing, housing, displaying, and transporting objects; and to those charged with designing and maintaining building environmental controls.
- Takes a lead role in disaster recovery across ASC. Supports emergency preparedness planning and response, in collaboration with other staff (faculty unit heads, library and central facilities staff, etc.).
- Specializes in book and paper conservation; also, able to work with image, audio-visual, and multiple media.
- Prepares and delivers course-integrated instruction related to the preservation and conservation of the library's collections to support faculty teaching.
- Engages in continuing professional development and keeps current on state-of-the-art practices in conservation.
- Maintains existing record-keeping system.
- Maintains established preservation and conservation policies and practices.

Qualifications

Required

- A graduate degree in conservation from an accredited program or equivalent combination of education and experience.
- Minimum one (1) years' experience working in the conservation field.
- Knowledge of chemical and physical properties of conservation materials and deterioration processes.
- Demonstrated knowledge of conservation history and ethics, such as the Code of Ethics and Guidance for Practice of the Canadian Association for Conservation of Cultural Property and of the Canadian Association of Professional Conservators.
- Demonstrated ability to perform high-quality conservation treatments, primarily books and paper, and to communicate effectively about treatment options and decisions.
- Demonstrated project management skills; energy, flexibility, creativity; and excellent interpersonal, organizational and communication skills.
- Demonstrated ability to collaborate and direct teams and manage resources responsibly; ability to work effectively independently.
- Knowledge of emergency preparedness and emergency response procedures.
- Physical ability to conduct conservation work (excellent hand-eye coordination and manual dexterity; ability to work standing up for many hours, work light machinery such as a board shear, lift and carry moderate weight, wear protective equipment when necessary).
- Demonstrated commitment to advancing the principles of Indigenization, equity, diversity, inclusion, anti-racism, and accessibility (I-EDIAA) in conservation environments and practices.

Preferred

- Three (3) or more years working in the conservation field.
- Demonstrated ability to perform high-quality conservation treatments on formats, such as photographs, leather/vellum, audiovisual media, ephemera, and/or three-dimensional objects.
- Experience in an academic environment with a variety of staff and faculty.
- Knowledge of preservation issues in different types of cultural institutions.
- Knowledge of archival theory and practice.
- Knowledge of the history of bookbinding.

- A record of professional engagement and contribution, such as research, publication, and involvement in pertinent professional and scholarly organizations.