

# Culture and heritage

The sector covers a huge range of roles including artistic (e.g. design, performance) management and administration, teaching, research and training.

Culture & Heritage jobs can be found in a wide range of organisations such as museums, galleries, auction houses, academic institutions, historic sites and many more specialist organisations.

Employers in this sector often rely on candidates to seek them out, and there are very few graduate schemes.

- The vast majority of roles are advertised as individual opportunities – check organisations' websites, as well as sector-specific job sites.
- A very small number of graduate schemes exist, however they are very competitive and often only recruit a few graduates per year.
- Don't just consider the big names. There are hundreds of smaller organisations, which often attract less competition. If you love the work of a particular organisation, then sign up to their newsletter for up-to-date information.
- Think about your local organisations and research within your region.
- Consider gaining experience with organisations providing specialist services to the culture and heritage world: for example, art investment, specialist legal and insurance firms, marketing and PR firms, specialist IT or training companies, public sector bodies and charities.
- It's also sometimes possible to move into the sector after gaining experience in another sector, e.g. law, accountancy, business strategy – culture and heritage organisations also need lawyers and accountants!

[See the Careers Service's briefing for more on specific roles](#), ideas on how to build experience, and links to external resources.

## Further study

You don't need a PhD to work in the sector although it's a requirement for some research and curatorial roles.

Further study (including master's courses) may help you to develop subject expertise that can make you stand out in a competitive market. It is important to research courses thoroughly before signing up, so consider the following:

- Browse job adverts to understand which roles commonly require additional study and which qualifications are sought.
- Investigate career destinations of graduates, and tutors' backgrounds, for courses you are considering.
- Ask alumni and others working in your preferred field which courses they took (if any) and/or which are the most respected.

## Getting in and entry points

Competition for positions can be high, so relevant experience on your CV is vital. Consider:

- Volunteering with local culture and heritage organisations – seek out local museums (for example, [www.museums.ox.ac.uk](http://www.museums.ox.ac.uk)) and heritage organisations, such as Oxford Preservation Trust.





- Advertised internships and short-term seasonal jobs offer great experience, paid or unpaid (for example, paid work staffing festivals and events; front-of-house or promotional work; support for tours; summer work with children and young people).
- Asking directly about jobs, internships or volunteering by networking and speculative approaches to organisations, even if there is nothing on their website.
- Positions may not be advertised widely (or at all!) so check websites and approach individual organisations directly.
- Create your own professional portfolio/blog to document your creative work and interests.

### Extra-curricular ideas

Take advantage of the rich cultural life of Oxford and the University to try things out. For example:

- Join community arts projects: for example, explore [www.oxonarts.info](http://www.oxonarts.info)
- Take part in the TORCH (The Oxford University Research Centre in the Humanities) [Heritage Pathway Programme](#).
- Try arts production or marketing; run events as 'entz' officer for your college.
- Submit articles for arts, culture and heritage sections of student newspapers.
- Start something new: for example, establish a performance group; create a heritage-style 'audio guide' to your college; write a blog.

### Next steps

[www.careers.ox.ac.uk/culture-heritage](http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/culture-heritage)

### Alumni profile

# Archie Williams

**What:** I catalogue and research the art that our department handles to prepare them for sale. Provenance research is an important part of my job, making sure lots have been legally exported. Since our department is small, I also help organise marketing, arrange lots on the view and communicate with clients.

**Why:** Working for a gallery or auction house is a good way to continue to learn about a topic or field while earning more money than you would in many museums. Be aware that even if you are a specialist, it is fundamentally a corporate job. You might find yourself having to rein in your research to meet other deadlines, or research material you don't find so interesting.

**Advice:** The specialist knowledge from my MPhil gave me an advantage when I applied for the cataloguer position. In my interview, specialists showed me different objects and I had to tell them what they were and what they were worth. Though I had some knowledge, lots of the objects were a complete mystery to me - especially the carpets. Be confident in what you know, honest about gaps in your knowledge, and proactive about filling them.

All auction houses have public views where you can see what will be sold and get a sense of how the market works. If you can't make it to a sale, then read the catalogues online, and make sure you go into an interview able to talk about what had been on the market recently, what it made, and why.

Remember that beyond Christie's and Sotheby's are a lot of smaller auction houses, galleries, and dealers who may have openings for permanent positions, internships, or work experience. Be confident about asking people for advice. The art world is built on personal relationships, but a lot of the big players get where they are because they love art and talking to people who share their interests. Find trade events or fairs and go to them.



### Position

Cataloguer (Islamic and Indian Art, Rugs and Carpets), Christie's.

### Background

MPhil Islamic Art and Architecture, Wolfson College, 2022.

## Alumni profile

# Dr Rachel Delman

**What:** I am responsible for fostering and nurturing mutually beneficial relationships between academic researchers and external heritage organisations. I work with researchers and professional services staff, and with the research and curatorial teams within the various heritage organisations we collaborate with, to identify the most promising avenues for sector-facing research. I am often in meetings with Oxford and sector colleagues or supporting the design of projects and funding applications. I also actively publish as an academic historian of the late medieval and early Tudor period.

**Why:** I first came to Oxford in 2013 to pursue a doctorate in History, following degrees at the universities of Nottingham and Cambridge, and almost a year as a library assistant at Cambridge University Library. Post-doctorate, I held research fellowships at the universities of Edinburgh and York. Despite having a traditional academic career path, I was always interested in public-facing research, seeking out public engagement and knowledge exchange opportunities with heritage organisations, the media and local history groups. My work at the intersection between academia and heritage brought me back to Oxford in 2022, when I began my current role.

**Advice:** The heritage and academic sectors are notoriously competitive, so you need to make yourself stand out. As subject specialists, our academic expertise can often feel niche, but we have a lot to offer, especially when we adopt a flexible and creative approach. I spent much of my early career moving around the country on fixed-term contracts, which is not desirable or possible for everyone, but I was proactive in using these opportunities to acquire skills, training and knowledge in line with my career ambitions. Short internships and placements can be a great way of gaining insights into the sector you want to work in and can serve as a springboard for developing knowledge, networks and further opportunities.



### Position

Heritage Partnerships  
Coordinator, University of Oxford.

### Background

DPhil History, University College,  
2017.