JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title: VARI Early Career Research Fellow
               – Digital Collections: Community Research (Content/Data/Object Project)

Division: Research and Collections

Dept/Section: Research

Contract: Part-time 3 days per week, Fixed-term contract (20 November 2017-30 October 2020)

Salary: £32,925.00 pro rata

Reporting to: Head of Collections Management (Project Lead: Content/Data/Object)

Background

The Research Department

The V&A is the world's oldest and largest museum of art, design and performance. It was the first museum to establish a designated Research Department and it is now home to the world's leading postgraduate programme in the history of design and material culture. The Research Department is part of the Collections Division and is charged with facilitating, promoting and conducting research across all aspects of the Museum's activities. The Department consists of a small number of permanent staff and a much larger number of visiting fellows as well as curatorial staff seconded into its ranks in order to work on specific research projects—including exhibitions and displays, print or digital publications and externally funded programmes that improve knowledge of and access to the Museum's collections. The Department also hosts a large postgraduate community: it co-delivers with the Royal College of Art an MA and PhD programme in the History of Design, and it plays a central role in the AHRC's Collaborative Doctoral Partnership (CDP) and Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) schemes. The V&A is now developing a V&A Research Institute (VARI) that will take its flourishing research culture into a new phase.

VARI: The V&A Research Institute

The V&A Research Institute (VARI) is a five-year programme of projects and partnerships supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. It takes the V&A's pioneering research culture into a new phase that allows the Museum to experiment with new ways of storing, displaying and studying its collections. VARI will give better access to the V&A's objects and join its experts with academic scholars, practicing designers and makers and members of the general public. Launched in 2016, VARI will create an innovative arena for developing collaborative research that is both collections-based and object focused. By making the collections we house and the expertise we host more visible, VARI will produce not just new knowledge but also new methods. Integrating research with teaching and learning, VARI will inform the Museum's major projects at its original location in London's South Kensington neighbourhood and at new locations around the country and across the globe.

VARI supports:

- collaborative research projects and research-driven teaching
- conferences and workshops
- public engagement events
- fellowships - internal and external, short- and long-term, early career and emeritus
- Andrew W. Mellon visiting professors
- research residencies for artists, designers and makers
- platforms for print and digital communication

Content/Data/Object

The V&A collects digital works in what is probably a wider variety of forms than any other institution in the UK. Recent and planned acquisitions include contemporary computer games, smartphones, software, working digital artworks and 3D printing codes. Such collections and the challenge they present have been the subject of working group analysis internationally, but solutions have often reduced conceptual, ephemeral and experiential aspects of these works to their material elements in order to catalogue and preserve them. There is so much more to duty of care for digital works than issues around technological obsolescence and migration to new platforms and contexts.

Taking a cue from social and linguistic theory and literary studies to look closely at the production and reception of such works, this project aims to find descriptive forms appropriate to collections management for the multiple dimensions, including time and experience, that they encompass.

Connecting up the dots between recent media philosophy and histories of conceptual art, the project will also problematise the distinction between tangible and intangible heritage – a distinction that does not seem to accommodate digital works. The sectoral standards for cataloguing description and the information architectures that hold them are also challenged by digital works, which go beyond three dimensions to include both time and experiential elements. How are artistic intentionality and audience experience incorporated in collections management terms?

Articulating the scope of the intellectual property inherent in the description and cataloguing of conceptual digital works is also at issue. Does current legislation and public policy, created in a pre-digital age, adequately serve our ambitions to collect, develop, present and interpret digital collections?

A series of expert workshops – involving museum practitioners, information technologists from both research and industry contexts, artists, digital media theorists, collections managers and curators – will articulate concepts around digital collections to inform policies and protocols which adequately encompass such digital collections, overcoming some knotty problems of access, interpretation and even definition.

Purpose of job

We are seeking two part-time Early Career Research Fellows to work on 'Content/Data/Object', a three year Victoria & Albert Museum Research Institute (VARI) project which will investigate the conceptual, representational, practical, and policy issues arising in the description, cataloguing and collection care of digital artworks. The project is rooted in the V&A's diverse digital collections and its collections information structures, and will focus on these as a springboard to engage with the creative, professional, academic and public communities in investigating and defining the status of heritage digital collections.

The project is structured into a series of work-packages that intend to discover and articulate the language that these connected communities use in the context of digital collections, and then to use this language to inform improvements and clarifications to professional semantics, vocabularies and data standards.

The project is split into two interrelated sets of workpackages:

'Community Research' Workpackages 1-3 are focused on research within stakeholder communities in digital artworks and collections. WP1 will investigate relative notions of tangibility and intangibility in material culture, and in particular the evolving relationship between digital art, conceptual art and traditional collections. WP2 will interrogate the development of digital collections as a practice, using identified recent V&A acquisitions to frame these discussions through workshops with professional stakeholders, including key input from creators and academics. WP3 will analyse audience interactions and the reception of digital collections, examining the challenges faced by those wishing to enable access to, and presentation of, digital collections in storage.

['Informatics Research' Workpackages 4- 5 run concurrently and work closely with the 'Community Research' workpackages 1-3. WP4 and WP5 will work towards aligning the community requirements for documentation with sectoral frameworks and the creation of proposals for new definitions and frameworks.]

The VARI Early Career Research Fellow – Digital Collections: Community Research will focus on work packages 1-3, working closely with and taking direction from the Project Lead and Project Co-Lead.

Main Tasks of VARI Early Career Research Fellow – Digital Collections: Community Research
(Content/Data/Object Project)

1. To participate in the creation, collation and information management of a comprehensive literature review for the research fields covered by workpackages 1-3
2. To prepare, schedule, conduct, record, archive and analyse interviews with individuals identified during literature review and identified by project colleagues, within the research fields covered by workpackages 1-3
3. To assist in the design, logistics, delivery, facilitation, capture and analysis of research workshops within the research fields covered by workpackages 1-3
4. To work closely with the Project Lead in the production of all deliverables for workpackages 1-3
5. To publish in appropriate peer reviewed journals on the research fields covered in workpackages 1-3

6. To coordinate project webpage content and blogposts and other forms of public dissemination of the project findings

7. To attend project team meetings and contribute to reports and communications about the development of the project

8. To contribute to the intellectual life of the Research Department and the V&A Research Institute

9. To be committed to health and safety and ensure familiarity with all of the Museum's health and safety policies and procedures.

10. To be security conscious, ensure familiarity and co-operation with all museum security procedures and ensure they wear a security pass at all times when on museum premises.

11. To promote equality and diversity in all aspects of their work by developing and maintaining positive working relationships, ensuring that colleagues are treated fairly and with respect/dignity and actively contributing to developments that support the museum's strategy for widening access, inclusion and diversity.

12. To carry out ad hoc duties as requested by appropriate managers within their department.

The postholder will be physically based in the Research Department/VARI, and will lead communication across a range of internal V&A departments, such as Collections, Exhibitions, Learning and Digital Media, as well as working closely with the community of artists, academics, museum professionals, information scientists, policy organisations and other key stakeholders. The postholder will also work closely with project staff of VARI, particularly the VARI Director and Deputy Director, in advancing VARI's overall goals and development.

Person Specification
Essential Requirements

1. An MA qualification in an appropriate and relevant research subject area: Digital humanities, museum studies, information management/science, art history

2. Experience in conducting research interviews and an understanding of the ethical and legislative requirements for conducting interviews

3. Experience of participation in workshop-based research

4. An excellent research and publication record commensurate with career stage;

5. Good attention to detail and observational skills

6. Good written and verbal communication skills

7. Ability to identify appropriate information sources for the subject area

Other Information

Hours/Salary:

£32,925 pro rata (three days per week)

Net working hours (i.e. excluding meal breaks) are 21.75 per week

The pro-rated salary for this role will be £19,892 per annum. Salaries are reviewed on an annual basis.

Annual leave:

28 days plus 8 days public holidays pro rata

Pension benefits:

You will be auto enrolled into the Museum's Group Personal Pension Scheme and have the opportunity on completion of Probation to an enhanced pension provision, including an employer contribution of 10%.

Other benefits:

Non-contributory life assurance policy (to value of 4 x annual salary)

An interest free season ticket or bicycle loan is available after three months.

Free entrance to all the major museums and exhibitions in London as well as many others.

Subsidised staff restaurant

Discounts on purchases in V&A shops

Childcare Voucher Scheme

Application process:

Please apply online via the V&A's website at www.vam.ac.uk/jobs

If you are having technical difficulties applying online, please use the online chat functionality which can be found on the bottom right hand side of the form. Alternatively, you can contact **Vacancy Filler** directly on **01509 236434**, and quote the role reference number and your application number (if known). Please note, Vacancy Filler are contactable, Monday – Friday between 9.00am – 5.00pm.

If you have any queries regarding the role and/or the V&A's recruitment process, you can email us – contacthr@vam.ac.uk or telephone us on 020 7942 2937 (Working hours Monday – Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm).

Closing date for receipt of applications is 9.30am Monday 30th October 2017

Interview to be held on Friday 10th November 2017

Interview expenses will not be paid unless there is a prior agreement.