Position Classification Standard for Museum Specialist And Technician Series, GS-1016

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SERIES DEFINITION

This series includes all classes of positions the duties of which include technical and specialized work in connection with the operation of public museums or the management of museum collections. This standard supersedes the standard for the Museum Aid Series, GS-0046, issued December 1957.

OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION

The operation of a modern public museum, which provides entertainment and educational services for the general public and facilities and research material for scholars, involves a variety of specialized and technical support work. The techniques, methods and specialized duties vary from museum to museum depending on the size, purpose, and subject matter of the institution, but the basic purpose of all positions in this series is to provide the technical back-up, support, and assistance necessary to managerial, scientific, and curatorial activities in museums.¹

In the lower levels, the work in these positions typically includes simple helper and custodial duties which involve specialized procedures and methods due to the museum environment where the jobs occur and sometimes due to the valuable and/or fragile nature of museum material being handled. In some cases, individuals simply perform these simple tasks, learning the necessary routines and procedures. In other instances, these duties represent a training situation in which individuals are selected, as a result of potentialities demonstrated on the job, to be developed to assume greater responsibility, to acquire more exact skills and to prepare for more demanding assignments. Sometimes these simple routine assignments are supplemented by formalized training programs.

In the middle grade levels, the assignment patterns of these positions are of two kinds. The first type is the technical assistant assignment. Incumbents in such positions serve as assistants to professional scientists, curators and museum managers or to higher grade Museum Technicians or Specialists. They do a variety of duties under direct supervision and according to well established procedures, which include such tasks as the routine acquisitioning of objects or specimens and keeping index and cataloging records. They may clean, prepare, and store collection objects; locate objects in storage area; tabulate information from records; prepare specimens for closer examination by the supervisor; or perform other duties which assist the supervisor in the physical care of the collection. In other cases, incumbents of these positions perform simple guide duties, prepare routine and nontechnical correspondence, and organize and tabulate data for research papers and articles.

¹ For general information about museums, museum functions, and curatorial and managerial activities see the General Occupational Information Section in introduction to standards for the Museum Series.

The other type of position found in these middle brackets is the "trainee specialist." Incumbents of these positions are receiving training in the methods and techniques of restoring and preserving museum objects, specimens, and artifacts. The techniques are often very exacting and the material being handled may be quite valuable. These positions tend to be fairly narrowly specialized, and there is little possibility of transfer of personnel from one specialization to another. Many of the duties in these trainee positions may be similar to those in the assistant type jobs. The difference is that incumbents are expected to gain greater and greater skill and proficiency in the difficult techniques of caring for specialized objects, and to make progress in the career ladder.

In the upper levels, there is an occasional experienced and highly trusted assistant-type assignment, but the majority of these jobs are occupied by highly trained and skilled specialists.

Employees in these positions undertake the study and innovation necessary to develop methods for restoring and preserving the specimens, artifacts, or objects of the collection. The possible variation in such work is immeasurably broad, and few guidelines are possible. The first limiting factor for any given job is the nature of the collection. Each type of collection involves a distinct body of technique necessary to its care, and these techniques or the knowledge necessary to perform the research and to develop them are not usually transferable from one type of collection to another.

For example, the methods for restoring and preserving paintings differ completely from the techniques of preserving paleontological fossils. The technical demands of a collection of animal tissue specimens are totally foreign to those required in caring for a collection of antique glass.

In the field of historical museum work, especially, there is a developing new concept with regard to the care of objects. Incorporated in the word "conservation," it combines the notions of restoration and preservation with the responsibility for insuring the historical validity of the object. Much of the technical research within each specialized type of collection is devoted to this concept. Illustrative of this approach are the three requirements inherent in the conservation of valuable museum antiques of all kinds: restoration work must be done with full knowledge and use of the tools, materials, and methods available to the original craftsman who made the object; preservation methods must provide protection against further deterioration; and, all contemporary work or material must be both identifiable and removable so that future scholars may examine the object in its original form.

The *conservation* of museum collections, then, involve continuing technical research -- research into the methods and tools of antiquity as well as investigation and imaginative use of modern technology and knowledge from chemistry and plastics to sonic engineering and electronics.

In natural science museums incumbents of these positions often accompany research teams into the field where specimens are collected. The special techniques used in the collection, reconstruction and preservation of specimens in collections related to geology, paleontology, anthropology or archeology, for example, may differ completely from those used in the care and conservation of historical objects. The technical demands, however, are no less exacting and the requirements for imagination and skill and the responsibility for valuable and rare material is equally great.

The functional patterns in museums include scholarly research, the development, maintenance and management of museum collections, the design, development and operation of museum exhibits, and a variety of activities related to public education. The supportive function of the positions covered by this standard frequently takes the form of assistance to professional or managerial activities which involves ability to follow procedures, acquire techniques and master the methodology, but no responsibility for programming, planning or directing the operation of the activity. In the higher levels, especially where the degree of specialization becomes very great, incumbents tend to develop a very high level of specialized technical "expertise" in one or another of the several areas of responsibility which are typical of professional museum occupations. While Museum Specialists have proficiency in research methodology typical of professional positions in the <u>Museum Curator Series, GS-1015</u>, or a professional subject-matter series, they are distinguished from these positions by (1) specialization within such narrow limits that broad professional training is not required, and (2) responsibility within a single museum function as opposed to the several functions typical of all professional positions.

EXCLUSIONS

Specifically excluded from this series are the following:

1. Positions in which the duties are professional in nature, involve research in the field of learning represented by the museum where assigned, and involve responsibility for the management of collections and the operation of the museum facility. Such positions should be allocated to the <u>Museum Curator Series, GS-1015</u>.

2. Positions of research scientist for which qualifications required include academic training and professional experience within a recognized discipline of the biological or physical sciences or history. Such positions should be allocated to the appropriate professional scientist or historian series.

3. Positions concerned primarily with the design, preparation or construction of exhibits. Such positions are classified in the <u>Exhibits Specialist Series</u>, <u>GS-1010</u>.

4. Positions which are wholly custodial in nature and require no special training or responsibility because of their being located in a museum. Such positions are properly excluded from the Classification Act by Section 202(7) of that law.

SPECIALIZATIONS

Specializations provided for positions in this series at GS-5 and above are based on broad groupings of the variety of subject matter found in museums and museum collections. Because of the highly specialized nature of some positions in this series, however, these broad groupings may not provide sufficiently exact tools for recruitment. In such cases, the procedures for special certification of qualified applicants and other special personnel techniques may be used. The titling pattern, however, should follow the broad subject-matter specialization provided below:

Aeronautics. -- Includes work with collections of aircraft and related objects and records pertaining to the individuals who advanced the science of aeronautics.

Anthropology. -- Includes work with collections of the material remains of past human life and activities, such as human fossils, relics, artifacts, monuments, etc., and to the science of man in relation to his physical character, distribution, peculiarities, origin, classification, relationship of races, environmental and social relations, and culture.

Art. -- Includes work with collections of works of art and the study of individual artists, various schools of art, and the tools and techniques employed in the production of art works. Included in this subject-matter area are fine arts and decorative arts. Works of art includes paintings, sculpture, ceramics and glass, furniture, and creations in many other media.

Geology. -- Includes work with records, specimens, and organic and inorganic materials which treat of the history of the earth and its life as recorded in rocks, etc., and with the life of past geologic periods, both vertebrate and invertebrate, as preserved in fossil forms.

History. -- Includes work with collections of objects and memorabilia which relate to historical events and to the persons who figure prominently in them. Included in this subject-matter area are civil and political history, military and naval history, economic history, cultural history, history and science of numismatics and philately, etc.

Natural Science. -- Includes activities where the required knowledge involves two or more of the natural sciences such as biology, botany, geology, zoology. Included in this subject-matter area are positions involving only one of the natural sciences, such as botany, when no specific specialization is provided elsewhere.

Technology. -- Includes work with the records, objects, specimens and materials which pertain to technological and scientific advances and to the inventors and scientists who have made outstanding contributions to progress. Included in this subject-matter area are exhibits related to mechanical engineering, transportation, textiles, leather, wood technology, agriculture, medicine and public health, crafts, manufacturing, photography, industry, and other areas of a scientific or technologic character.

Zoology. -- Includes work involving animal specimens covering the classes, groups, phyla, genera, and species comprising the vertebrate and invertebrate animals.

General. -- Includes activities where the required knowledge cut across several subject-matter fields, or where work does not logically fit into any of the other specializations provided.

JOB EVALUATION METHOD

Three basic factors affect the value-levels of Museum Technician and Specialist positions. These are (1) the variety and difficulty of the duties, (2) the extent of the responsibility, and (3) the kind and intensity of the required knowledge and skills. Grade level criteria are presented under three headings which cover these factors, as follows:

Assignment: Description of duties including examples which illustrate the degree of variety and difficulty typical at each grade level.

Responsibility: Description of kind and degree of supervision and, where pertinent, indication of the extent of accountability and value of objects handled, typical of each grade level.

Requirements: Discussion of the ability, skills and special knowledge necessary at each grade level.

MUSEUM AID, GS-1016-02

Assignment

Performs simple, repetitive duties in connection with the care of museum collections or facilities; including such tasks as:

-- Unpacks acquisitions using care not to damage contents; moves specimens to work rooms or storage areas. May receive instruction in simple sorting and cleaning routines.

-- Prepares simple preservation solutions, fumigants, etc. May perform periodic inspection of containers of such material in storage shelves or among collection to insure that proper strength and level is maintained.

-- May mark specimens or objects, replace labels, do simple filing.

-- Constructs boxes or crates for outgoing specimens, receives training in museum storage and packing techniques.

-- Does routine inspection of laboratory, work shop and display areas and performs simple custodial chores to maintain premises in neat and orderly condition.

-- May do special duties such as feeding live specimens, maintaining stock room, supplies, or seeing that literature supplies are available in public rooms.

Responsibility

Works under step-by-step direction, oral instructions and constant supervision.

Requirements

Ability to do repetitive and manual work, follow simple oral direction, work with others in a crew. Work often requires close attention to detail, dexterity of hands and arms and the capability to learn simple routine procedures such as packing and storage techniques. Also ability to learn more complex duties typical of next higher grade.

MUSEUM AID, GS-1016-03

Assignment

Performs routine duties in connection with the acquisitioning, maintenance and display of museum collections, including such tasks as:

-- Routine cleaning and sorting of specimens. May receive training in simple repairs of broken specimens, mark specimens with catalog numbers and maintain necessary catalog records.

-- Stores specimens in trays, boxes, bottles, vials or other containers; replaces preservatives as needed, i.e., maintains proper level of fumigant in dry collection.

-- Packs outgoing specimens, checks off returned material on invoices; replaces specimens in proper storage space.

-- Makes periodic inventories of supplies, working tools, literature, etc. Makes regular inspections of work rooms and public areas. Requisitions supplies and materials as needed and maintains all facilities and supplies in an orderly manner.

May use variety of tools and machinery for lifting, moving or positioning heavy material, i.e., jacks, levels, hoists, cranes.

May receive instruction and training in specialized preservation procedures or other specialized tools.

(Note: Museum Aid, GS-3, is an important recruitment source for trainee technicians, and informal beginning training in specialized tasks is not unusual at this level.)

Responsibility

Works under immediate supervision of Museum Technician or Specialist or a professional employee. Receives general instructions on sequencing and planning of work for routine, repetitive chores where work is controlled by procedures and established practice. Instructions for unusual assignments are given on a task basis. Routine work is spot-checked and other work is inspected by supervisor. Any specialized training tasks are performed under extremely close supervision and guidance.

Requirements

In addition to the requirements specified for GS-2, needs familiarity with routine procedures and practices of museum including storage, packing and supply room methods and materials, knowledge of simple filing and cataloging systems, understanding of major divisions of museum collection and appreciation of the delicacy, rarity or value of museum specimens.

MUSEUM AID, GS-1016-04

Assignment

Performs a variety of semitechnical and assistant duties in connection with the management, preservation and maintenance of a museum collection and/or the establishment and maintenance of a public exhibit area for the display of museum objects or facsimiles, including such assignments as:

-- Receives and unpacks specimens, verifying invoices and other shipping records; cleans, sorts and marks specimens making minor repairs as necessary; records catalog numbers in proper records; stores specimens in appropriate containers according to established procedures and maintains necessary inventory records. May make preliminary classification of specimens received as accessions.

-- Identifies objects or specimens when such determinations are routine and obvious; prepares specimen for examination by professional worker; answers routine correspondence or prepares answer upon instruction for supervisor's signature.

-- Prepares specimens or objects for storage or display when such preparations are covered by detailed procedures, and are done repetitively.

May use a variety of hand tools or small power tools, metal or woodworking equipment; follow fairly complex but well-established procedures or assist supervisor in complex and difficult duties.

May be required to perform guide duty in public areas of museum, answering questions and giving information as requested from visitors to museum. Such assignments are usually of short duration and during slow periods in the public rooms.

Responsibility

Works under general supervision of a higher level employee for usual day-to-day duties which are assigned on a general responsibility basis. Work may be spot-checked from time to time as a high degree of accuracy is required, but usually no detailed inspections are involved. Special or unusual assignments are given on a task basis with oral instructions and training as necessary. Supervision is readily available and work may be checked in progress and given complete inspections.

Requirements

In addition to requirements specified for GS-3, must have thorough knowledge of routine procedures for handling museum collection material, records, storage and display methods and a good knowledge of classification system used in the collection. Needs fairly comprehensive "lay "knowledge in one or more general areas of information such as geography, general science or biology, chemistry or physics, American or European history, archeology, art, etc. May require specialized abilities such as dexterity and skill in using tools, ability to meet and talk to people, or special aptitudes for observation, spatial relationships, etc.

MUSEUM TECHNICIAN (APPROPRIATE SPECIALIZATION) GS-1016-05

Assignment

Performs technical duties in connection with the management of a museum collection and/or the establishment and maintenance of a public exhibit area. Typical assignments include: *Acquisitioning and cataloging duties:* Matches field labels, notes and other information with newly received specimens; labels specimens using data from field diaries; inventories collections, documents and stores specimens; maintains cataloging; indexing and cross reference system.

Identification duties: Identifies and sorts specimens (skeletal parts, insects, geological specimens, artifacts, memorabilia, coins, -- the possibilities are exceedingly broad, but each job will be specialized within a fairly narrow range to one type of specimen or object). Depending on the type of object, working tools necessary to identification may include scales, torsion balance, electrolytic baths, optical instruments, ultraviolet and infrared techniques, precision measuring devices such as scale, caliper and micrometer, or other instruments of similar operating difficulty. Identifications are usually tentative and subject to confirmation by supervisor. May be required to locate and identify uncataloged specimens.

Docent duties: Performs routine guide duties, answering visitors' questions, giving general information and directions. Such assignments are usually confined to one section of the museum devoted to a limited subject-matter area.

Research assistant duties: Assists professional supervisor in the compilation and tabulation of data necessary to research being conducted in collection; under direct supervision may prepare bibliographic material involving familiarity with library techniques. May accompany curator on field trips to acquire specimens and receive training in field techniques and procedures.

Restoration duties: Performs careful and delicate procedures necessary to the restoration, preservation and conservation of the objects or specimens of the collections. Such duties characteristically require skill and knowledge of procedures and techniques specifically applicable to the collection. Typical of this level of difficulty are the following: Careful assembly of fragments of a broken specimen requiring careful fitting, gluing; routine repairs in wood or metal objects requiring careful matching of parts; removal of paint or wood finishes requiring care not to damage object; roughing out of simple skeletons.

Responsibility

Except in conditions of special training, works under general supervision. Routine work is assigned on very general basis with no instruction as to procedures or sequencing, and is judged on a "results" basis. Special assignments are accompanied with necessary specific instructions and are reviewed upon completion. Training situations may involve close supervision and guidance until the new technique is mastered. Employees in these positions often work on valuable and/or rare objects and specimens involving a high degree of responsibility for their protection.

Requirements

In addition to the requirements indicated at GS-4, incumbents of these positions must possess or acquire a skill and beginning "expertise" in the specialized subject of the collection where assigned; also required is knowledge of museum procedures, necessary techniques, required tools and materials.

MUSEUM TECHNICIAN (APPROPRIATE SPECIALIZATION), GS-1016-07

Assignment

Performs technical duties in connection with the management of a museum collection and/or the establishment and maintenance of a public exhibit area. Typical assignments include:

Collection assignments: Does any or all of the routine and special duties in connection with the physical maintenance of the collection. Special duties may include such projects as planning and

rearranging storage space, designing storage cabinets or cases; developing or improving record system; revising operating procedures; devising improved preservation methods. However, the routine, day-to-day acquisitioning, cataloging, handling of incoming and out-going material, cleaning, repairing, marking and storing of specimens, locating stored material and maintenance of relevant records is as characteristic of this level as it is of the GS-5 level.

Identification assignments: Routine tasks are similar to those detailed at GS-5. However, sorting and classification decisions are carried to a greater degree of refinement, and routine decisions are not usually subject to supervisory confirmation. On special problems such as the identification of a rare or unusual specimen requiring extensive knowledge or subtle distinctions, the Museum Technician at this level may make preliminary determinations subject to supervisory review.

Docent and information duties: Performs regular guide duties throughout exhibit area if it is a small or subject-restricted museum, or throughout a major gallery of a larger and more varied museum. Provides readily accessible, technical or general information to students or the public in the museum or by telephone or correspondence. May furnish technical information to teachers or scholars on specialized subjects closely related to museum specialty.

Research assistant duties: Compiles bibliographic data, searching publication sources covering entire field of specialization; revises bibliographies, maintains special records or indices, or searches sources for special information; may conduct simple experiments with various presentation materials, prepare specimens for further study. May accompany research teams on field trips, keep detailed field records, learn skills related to collecting and identifying specimens.

Restoration duties: Performs all established procedures necessary to the conservation of the collection. Some of these techniques require very precise skill and involve complicated procedures and infinite patience. May assist with experimental work in the development of new methods. May begin concentrated study and practice in a specialized field of restoration or preservation. The following tasks are typical of this level of difficulty: copying antique furniture following the methods of the original craftsman; positioning and imbedding unusual or awkward tissue specimens in plastic in a manner that preserves distinguishing coloration; simple cleaning of paintings; positioning skeletal remains and blocking in missing parts; mounting delicate and fragile old textiles; the simple restoration of antique guns to working condition (or cameras, or musical instruments, or aircraft, or an endless variety of objects).

Responsibility

Works under general supervision. Routine assignments are of a continuing nature and once incumbent is trained to operating proficiency few additional instructions are made. Special assignments are accompanied with general instructions on objectives and general methods. Most work is evaluated on a basis of accomplishment. Training situations at this level may require very fine finesse of technique or involve priceless or unique objects or specimens, and under such circumstances the training supervisor maintains close watch as work progresses.

Requirements

In addition to the requirements indicated at GS-5, incumbents of these positions must possess a developing skill and knowledge in a specialized area of museum work, i.e., the research methods related to the collection; the conservation techniques necessary to collection objects; the general scientific or historic knowledge represented in the museum; the procedures and methods used in the management of the collection or the operation of the museum.

MUSEUM SPECIALIST (APPROPRIATE SPECIALIZATION), GS-1016-09

Assignment patterns

Museum Specialist positions are characterized by a strict specialization pattern. This specialization occurs in two ways: first, these positions are specialized within the subject area of the museum or collection where they are located (American history, Numismatics, Geology, Archeology, Medicine, etc.) and second, they specialize further in one of the basic functional areas found in museums (management of the collection, conservation of objects, educational responsibilities, etc.).

At the GS-9 level, there are some positions which share the "assistant" characteristics which are typical of Museum Technician assignments. Such positions will be filled with trusted and experienced employees who carry out special research assistance duties for professional employees or who assist higher-level specialists or professional museum employees in the management of very large collections, in the operation of large museums, or in especially difficult research and experimentation in the development of new and improved methods and techniques of conservation.

Most Museum Specialist positions, however, include independent assignments. At this level, for example, some incumbents undertake the entire management of a small and well-established collection, being responsible for acquisitioning, storage, records, loans, packing, preservation and security; others are in charge of the public education facilities of a moderate-sized museum, managing film and slide service, library, docent activities and related services; and still others are responsible for conservation programs involving fairly complex procedures, delicate techniques or extremely valuable objects, but requiring little innovation, experimentation or development of improved methods.

Because the variation in subject specialization is as broad as the subject of museums it is impossible to detail the possible variations in such assignments. Characteristic of this grade level, however, are these conditions:

Responsibility for a single museum function Administration of an established and operating program Difficult technique and complex methods Little requirement for technical research

Although criteria for supervisory positions are not covered by these standards some Museum Specialist positions involve supervisory responsibilities. When such duties constitute a significant consideration the position should be evaluated with reference to the appropriate guide for evaluating supervisory positions.

Responsibility

Works under general supervision. Assignments are of a continuing nature and effectiveness is measured by results. May carry fairly heavy responsibility for valuable and for rare collection material, but accountability is somewhat restricted by established procedures and regulations. Supervisor is readily available for advice and guidance.

Requirements

In addition to the requirements indicated at the GS-7 level, incumbents must possess extensive knowledge related to the specialization involved. Such knowledge (depending on the specialization) may include techniques of chemistry or physics, biology, cultural history, archeology or ethnology, geology, art, or any other field of learning. Also required may be writing, speaking or design abilities and a thorough mastery of related museum operating procedures.

MUSEUM SPECIALIST (APPROPRIATE SPECIALIZATION), GS-1016-11

Assignment patterns

Museum Specialist positions at GS-11 level follow the general assignment pattern discussed at the GS-9 level. However, at this level, the position is clearly one of an independent worker highly skilled and expert in the subject of his specialization. Some incumbents of these positions undertake full management responsibilities for very large and complex collections; others may develop and operate a very large educational program involving traveling exhibits, formal courses, lecturing services, etc., in a major museum; still others may be in charge of conservation programs where methods and techniques are frequently unknown and require research and development, or do other work of similar scope and difficulty.

Characteristics of this grade level are the following conditions:

Responsibility for a single museum function Development or expansion of a museum operating program Extremely difficult technique and few established methods Regular requirement for technical research

(Note: See paragraph under GS-9 relative to supervisory responsibilities.)

Responsibility

Responsibility is similar to that indicated at GS-9. The difference in responsibility between the two grade levels lies in the greater scope of the work typical at the GS-11 level.

Requirements

In addition to the requirements indicated at the GS-9 level, incumbents must possess more intensive knowledge of the specialization involved, experience and ability with research methods, or demonstrated ability in writing, speaking or design work.

MUSEUM SPECIALIST (APPROPRIATE SPECIALIZATION), GS-1016-12

Nonsupervisory museum specialists at this level are highly skilled experts in their special field. Often such specialists have important reputations and are sought out by others in the same or related fields for advice and consultation on difficult technical problems. Frequently they carry on difficult and extensive research in the development of improved methods and techniques, and sometimes they publish technical papers and articles resulting from these studies (though such publication is not a requirement for evaluation of the position at this grade level).

The GS-12 level usually marks a decided broadening in the interests and responsibilities of specialist positions. This breadth does not infer a departure from the somewhat narrow specialty of museum work in which the specialist has become expert, but rather a broadening application of his specialization. The specialist assigned a greater variety of objects involving more difficult and delicate problems is called on for expert advice more frequently and on more difficult problems. May undertake more difficult research with findings of broader implications, etc., than at the GS-11 level.

Specialist positions at this level tend to be highly individualistic and frequently occur as the result of the growth, development and maturity of the incumbents who fill them. The possible subject area of such positions spreads over the entire span of museum work and therefore the inclusion of specific assignments or functions in this standard is impractical. However, the following factors are usually characteristic of such positions:

Specialization within a single museum function Recognition within the field of unusual skill and expertise of the incumbent A tendency of increasing variety in the problem encountered A pattern of continuous research and experimentation Museum specialists may direct the activity of a small staff of helpers, but such incidental supervisory responsibility is not prerequisite nor does it require that the position be designated "supervisory." When supervisory duties constitute a grade influencing consideration and are of such a nature as to require specific qualifications, the position should be evaluated with reference to the appropriate guide for evaluating supervisory positions.