

Local History Volunteer

Library Service

Purpose of the role:

To assist members of the public in accessing the local history resources available. This could include taking part in specific heritage projects outlined in the main tasks and activities.

Main tasks and activities may include:

- Help people to access the catalogues and indexes and use these to access the material held in the archives.
- To assist in the use of microfilm/microfiche readers.
- Help people use the library computers to access information on websites such as Ancestry and other online resources.
- Help people to interpret the information they find.
- Help staff at any linked events.
- cataloguing documents, photographs, pamphlets, maps, and volumes (a mix of sorting, listing, describing, and summarising them)
- indexing collections (for example, making a reference list of journal articles or tagging archive catalogue entries with subjects, places, or names)
- digitising items (using a scanner or digital camera)
- assistance in finding and preparing local history articles for use in promoting the library e.g. for social media posts

Project example:

- Preparing artefact records for addition onto Know Your Place.
- Adding new information records onto the Know Your Place mapping website.
- The role may also involve database transcription, historic research, digital photography, and hands-on collections work.

(Know Your Place West of England is an ambitious digital mapping project covering Gloucestershire, Somerset, Wiltshire and the former Avon area. It provides unprecedented online access to historic maps and heritage information of the region, building a rich and diverse community resource of local heritage for everyone.)

Volunteers will have these qualities, skills, and experiences:

You do not need to have any previous experience of volunteering or working in a library. For this role you will need:

- An interest in libraries and desire to be an advocate for the service.
- Moderate IT competence e.g. retrieving and saving computer files. Experience with photo editing software, or Canva would be advantageous but training can be provided (required to upload photos to Know Your Place)
- The ability to follow instructions and work carefully and methodically.
- Good attention to detail.
- To be organised and motivated.
- Have an interest in and knowledge of the history of the local area

Types of training and resources available to support volunteers:

- An Induction which explains how the library service operates and outlines all the policies and procedures that you will need to know.
- A tour of the library at which you will be volunteering.
- Introductions to members of staff and other volunteers, alongside whom you will be volunteering.
- Out of pocket expenses can be paid.
- Accreditation may also be available.
- Volunteers will be required to attend a 1–2-hour training session (dates and venues across the region tbc).

How often does the volunteer activity tend to take place?

We would like volunteers to commit to 1 hour a week, the timing of this is flexible based on availability.

Project: We have an extensive photograph collection to upload to Know Your Place, which we aim to complete within 2 years. We are hoping that once the photographs have been uploaded, we can work with our volunteers to discuss how best to expand the project and take it forward.

Where does the voluntary activity take place?

The North Somerset Archive is based in the local studies library at Weston Library.

Project activities can take place at any North Somerset Library. There may also be the option to carry out this volunteering role from home. Please note access to a computer, desktop, or laptop, with a broadband connection would be required. We are unable to supply equipment to volunteer from home but will provide access if volunteering within a library (subject to information security and data protection controls).

Please see the Vacancies page of our website for more information: <https://n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/libraries-leisure-open-spaces/libraries/library-volunteering/vacancies>

or call using the details below.

Name and contact details of the volunteer co-ordinator:

Name: The Library Volunteering Team

Email: library.volunteers@n-somerset.gov.uk

Phone numbers: 01934 426 657 or 01275 884315 or 01275 888 864

Other important information:

- If you are concerned that volunteering may affect any benefits you receive, please ask and we will do our best to assist you.
- All library volunteering roles involve dealing with the public and are customer focused.
- Volunteers are complementary to paid workers and volunteers should not be used to replace staff.

Document updated 17/12/2024