

What Does A Curator Do?

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First of all, what is a curator? Generally speaking, a curator creates, oversees and takes care of any given collection at a museum, historic site, aquarium, or zoo. The word curator comes from the Latin word curatus, which means "care."

Jobs Related to Museum Curators

According to the BLS, there are approximately 29,100 workers employed in the U.S. as archivists, curators and museum technicians. The industry is expected to grow much faster than average through 2018, but job competition is expected to be fierce.

Related Keywords

- [Archivist](#)
- [Conservationist](#)
- [Art History](#)
- [Museum Technician](#)
- [Museum Director](#)
- [Guest Services Supervisor](#)
- [Facilities Supervisor](#)

Common Job Requirements

- Graduate degree in history or museum studies
- Doctorate-level degree may be required
- Hands-on experience
- Knowledge in a number of fields
- Computer skills
- Ability to design exhibits

Salary

\$47,220 – curators' median annual wages according to the May 2008 BLS. For curators employed by the Federal Government average annual salary spiked to \$90,205.

Curators have various responsibilities, usually dictated by the size of the venue, its mission, budget, and who else is on staff. A curator can be an expert in a narrowly defined field of

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expertise, or a versatile doing a little bit of everything the job might require -- like, collecting on invoices and grant-writing. That doesn't sound like fun. (I thought it was all King Tut and Hope diamonds!)

Then again, it would be nice to choose the exhibits and shape the artistic bent in the community. You could spotlight your favorite photographer, or host a showing of haute couture fashion... even showcase classic cars, as Museum of Fine Arts in Boston did for Ralph Lauren's collection.

The curator is in charge of building a museum's permanent collection, and then caring for it with proper storage and display techniques (such as the use of a **hygrothermograph**, which measures temps and relative humidity). The person in this position does oversee collections (and the debut parties!), write short, descriptive texts based on items' provenance or historical value, and network with like-minded associates and museum-goers.

Now that you think you might want to be a curator, how do you go about it? Well, a bachelor's degree is essential (at minimum; master's preferred). Majors usually include history, art history, American studies, or whatever your particular field of interest might hold if you plan on specializing. A solid background in research and writing is important. You'll have to start at the (unpaid) bottom by volunteering or/and interning. Some big museums offer such opportunities, but don't overlook historic villages, house museums, offbeat exhibits and the like.

According to StateUniversity.com, the employment outlook for budding curator is good. They do, however, place the median income at only \$43,000 (but if you're lucky enough to land a big job at a well-known museum, you can rake in a lot more).

For now, I think I'd better stick to blogging about movie-character curators... but a girl can dream!



[Staci Layne Wilson](http://stacilaynewilson.wordpress.com) is the author of several books, and works as a freelance journalist in entertainment, fashion, and film. She enjoys writing about herself in the third person. Staci Layne blogs about the celebrities she interviews at <http://stacilaynewilson.wordpress.com>, and she tweets about her coffee breaks at <http://twitter/staciwilson>.

