



Museum Curator

Training and Education

- Most **curators** have advanced degrees in fields related to their work—art, art history, archaeology, American history, museum studies, and others.
- Many students who want to work in museums begin hands-on training early, with **internships** or volunteer work.
- Some curators get additional education in marketing, fundraising, and professional writing. Most curators must help write grant proposals and do other specialized writing.
- Workers expand skills and knowledge by attending symposia and conferences, as well as reading historical, arts, and other journals.

Earnings

Median annual wage is \$47,930.

Job Prospects

- Employment growth will be much greater than the average for other professions.
 - Still, there will be lots of competition for desirable jobs.
- Candidates with advanced degrees, publications, experience with large exhibition projects, specialized training, and fundraising skills will have the best chances at jobs.

Job Duties

- Caring for objects in a museum's collection
 - Acquiring and cataloging items for a museum's collection
- Planning, funding, organizing, and installing **exhibitions**, or sharing museum collections with the public in other ways
- Working with museum educators to present programs for the public, including school children

Working Conditions

- Jobs in this field may be uncertain because they are sometimes subject to budget cuts at the state or federal level. Jobs and salaries are also affected by cuts in arts and culture funding by foundations, whenever they change funding preferences to direct more resources to other causes.
- Curators may have to do heavy lifting to install exhibitions, as well as climb high ladders to adjust lighting on objects.
- The job often entails evening and weekend work for exhibition openings and educational programming.

Q & A with Sarah Henry, Deputy Director and Chief Curator, Museum of the City of New York

What does a curator do?

Depending on the museum where one works, it can mean taking care of collections of art, historical objects, or even biological specimens. A curator selects items to go into the collection, cares for them, and helps present a selection of them to the public in an exhibition. Writing is a big part of the job, especially explaining the ideas in an exhibition.

How did you prepare for being a curator?

I have a Ph.D. in U.S. history. After some time as a university professor, I came to the Museum of the City of New York to work in public history, a collaborative effort to interpret history for the public.

What do you do at work?

My job is varied. I do writing, including grant proposals and texts about exhibitions and programs. I meet with and mentor staff members. We talk about the ideas that will be presented in exhibitions and programs and how they can be improved or made clearer.

I work with numbers and budgets. When donors support our programs, I must make sure all the expenses add up and fit into the money we have.

I also do research, and as deputy director, I work with colleagues in all our departments to examine the functions of the museum.

What do you most enjoy about your work?

There is a wonderful moment when an exhibition is coming together, when after years of research and locating objects, we are beginning the installation. Objects are being unpacked, and we may be reuniting objects with a shared history that have not been in the same space for a long time. This is very exciting.

I also give tours. Here, we work with the physical evidence of history, which connects us with the people whose stories we are telling. As we share authentic historical objects and documents with our visitors, we can explain why history matters. This is very empowering for all of us.

You can view the current exhibitions at the museum at <http://www.mcny.org/exhibitions/>

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