Trainee Travels: 
Exploring Librarianship in Cambridge

Cambridge libraries have been welcoming Graduate Trainees for over twenty years, helping new information professionals to take their first steps discovering the wonderful world of librarianship. Trainees hail from diverse backgrounds, with past members of the group coming to Cambridge from Canada, Germany, France, Ireland, Scotland, and England. The majority of us, like our predecessors, will move on to study a Masters degree in an information-related field. Though we might not all come back to Cambridge we will keep strong ties with the libraries and our trainee peers which have provided us with such an invaluable experience. Adopt a trainee, gain a new friend for life.

Why are graduate trainees important?

- **Mutual benefits** – Trainees visit other libraries, widening their knowledge of the profession whilst providing a new perspective and ideas that can be implemented in their own library
- **Professional development** – Assisting in training new professionals enriches the progression opportunities of current library staff
- **Building strong networks** – Trainees enable the creation of lasting professional networks which support future careers
- **Practical knowledge and awareness** – Trainees go on to study information management qualifications with prior vocational knowledge resulting in high quality new professionals

Raphaelle: Trinity College Library

If I had to choose one thing that Trinity has taught me, it is that you cannot reduce being a librarian to just one task. There is always something new, or on the opposite something very old, to read, catalogue, shelf, and new questions from our users to answer everyday. The traineeship has allowed me to manipulate a large range of materials, and I am very grateful for the variety of tasks I have been able to undertake. I cannot wait to see what the remaining time at Trinity holds for me.

Daryll: Schlumberger Reading Centre

I work at a corporate library for the world’s largest oilfield services company. My library is different from a university library - with a smaller physical collection and no rare books, most materials are accessible electronically. My customers are mostly researchers in science and engineering.

I value my library as a communal space where people share ideas, build relationships, drink tea and reflect (perhaps even take a book out!). My traineeship enables me to pursue skills in archiving, cataloguing, IT and organising events. I frequently visit other libraries in Cambridge to gain insights into librarianship.

Eva: Newnham College Library

As a comparatively ‘young’ college that battled oppressive forces to even exist (!), the pride of Newnham College Library is the care and nurturing environment it provides to its all female student body as much as its inspiring feminist collections. Having come from working in a public library, the atmosphere of care and attentiveness towards both students and library resources suited me perfectly. I could not wish for a more pleasant environment in which to learn the ropes of cataloguing, classification and the countless other tasks required to keep an academic library running smoothly.

Isobei: Queens’ College Library

At Queens’ library my time and training are split equally between the student library and the old library, meaning my work is really varied. Working directly with both rare books and academic library specialists, I am able to train in aspects of both disciplines: for example, both modern and rare books cataloguing, acquisitions, social media, publicity, research and enquiries. I have helped curate an exhibition of 18th century pamphlets in the old library and also to develop a study facility for graduate students. The range of experience and training is perfect preparation for my future library career.

Natasha: Pembroke College Library

I have already learnt so much including cataloguing, researching policies and, of course, helping readers. Everything my team does is for the benefit of our readers and the library. So far the pinnacle of my traineeship is having the opportunity to improve our service and making a lasting impact beyond the year. I am very lucky to have colleagues who enjoy training the next generation of librarians and are dedicated to supporting us.

Nicola: Kings School Ely

Being a trainee in a school has enabled me to explore both my interests in librarianship and my desire to work in education. As well as the typical library skills of cataloguing, shelving and making displays, I am also involved in everyday school life. I help the students with accessing databases, researching Extended Projects, and general pastoral care. For me, the best thing about being a trainee is that is has opened up new opportunities and career paths that I would not have considered before.

Ruth: Christ’s College Library

As you probably heard from the word, being a trainee is mainly training. The great advantage of the traineeships at Cambridge is that it gives you a group to train with. As Cambridge Trainees, we have attended events, visits, and small courses together. We have learnt to work as a group in a professional environment, for example when creating the poster you are reading right now.

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