



ST JOHN'S COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Further Particulars for the post of Special Collections Librarian

March 2025



About the College

St. John's College is one of the largest of the University of Cambridge's 31 colleges. Colleges are where students live, eat and socialise, and receive small group teaching sessions. St John's has about 900 students, 160 Fellows (that is, resident academics who teach and research), and about 250 staff.

The buildings and grounds of St John's are a magnificent environment in which to work, but it is the people of St John's who give the place its unique identity. Diversity, independence and intellectual excellence make it a dynamic place in which people can thrive. Read more about St John's on the College's website: www.joh.cam.ac.uk.

The Library

The Library's operations are underpinned by the College's core vision and values: to deliver an outstanding and complete educational experience for undergraduates and graduates, to support research of international importance, and to introduce undergraduates to the nature and excitement of original research. The Library's work covers three distinct areas:

The Working Library is open 24/7 to members of the College. It contains 150 study spaces, a seminar room, audio-visual room, and IT facilities, whilst its collections focus on providing access to the materials needed by undergraduates across all subjects in their first two years of study. (Faculty and departmental libraries, and the main University Library provide the specialist and research materials required in later years.)

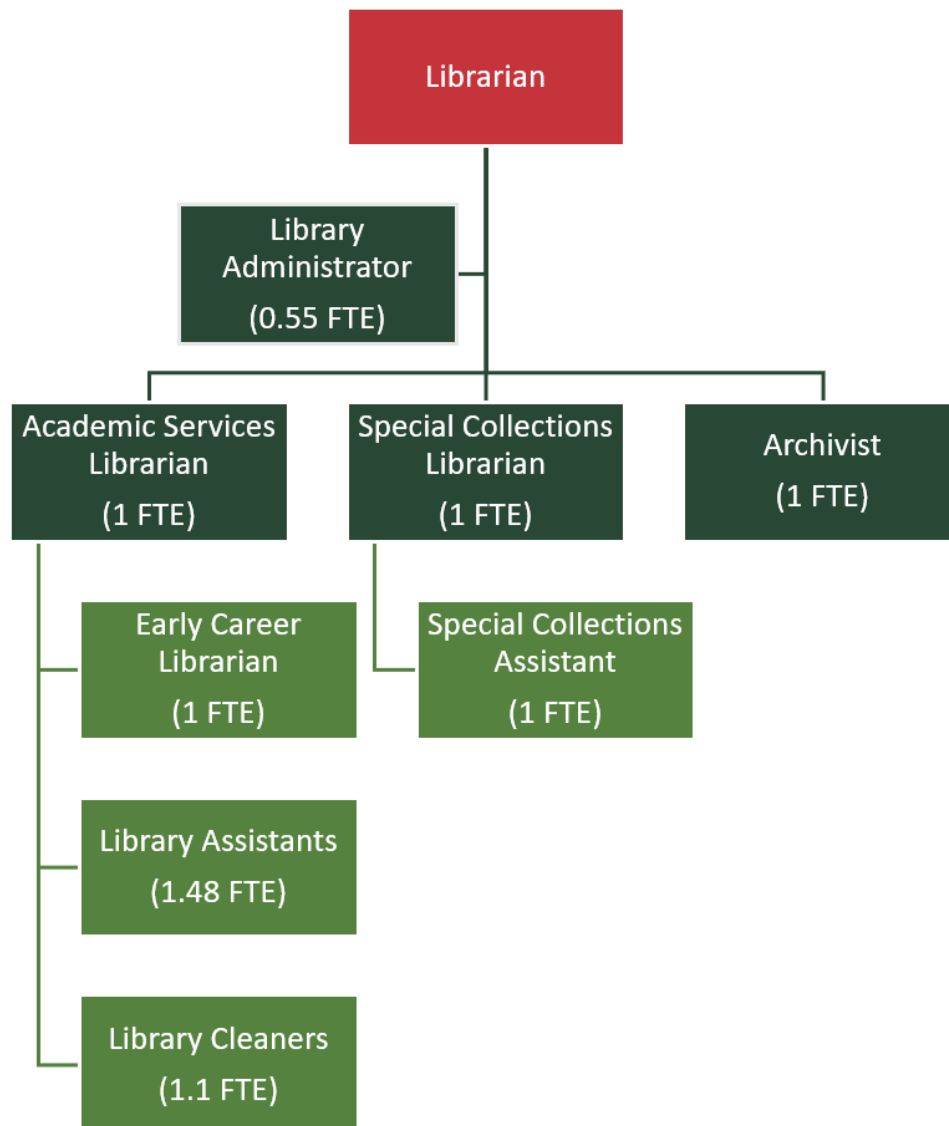
The Old Library holds special collections including medieval manuscripts, early printed books, photographs, artworks, and collections of the personal papers of many past members and Fellows of the College.

The Archive Centre keeps the institutional records of the College, its foundress, and the medieval hospital which preceded its foundation.

Whilst the Working Library primarily serves the members of the College, special collections and archives are consulted by scholars from around the world. All three areas of the department's operations have been awarded some form of national accreditation.



Library and Archives Organisational Chart



Duties & Responsibilities

Job Purpose: The principal purpose of this post is to oversee the collections, security and day-to-day operations of the Old Library, the rare books, manuscripts and special collections, at the direction of the Librarian. The special collections include personal archival material but not the college archive, which is the responsibility of the Archivist.

1. Reader Services

- Answer enquiries from researchers to facilitate appropriate access to the collections;
- Maintain the appointment diary for the Rare Books Reading Room;
- Supervise the Reading Room and the use of special collections materials;
- Retrieve material from onsite storage ;
- Ensure the security and care of manuscripts while they are being used;
- Help readers who require reproduction of images;
- Assist with the maintenance and enhancement of the Library's online catalogues and digital collections
- Oversee the training and work of other Library staff when they are working in the Old Library, and attract and manage suitable volunteers when required.

2. Collections: Care and Conservation

- Ensure best practice in the curation of collections to achieve their proper care;
- Develop and maintain a thorough knowledge of the physical state of the collection and its storage environment;
- Assist the Librarian in negotiating with potential donors for gifts and bequests to the Special Collections, working within the Library's donations and collection development policies.
- Oversee collection management within the Special Collections, advising on retention of materials and on appropriate storage locations
- Monitor the condition of manuscripts and books fetched to the Reading Room and mounted for display. Report any changes to environment or fabric of the premises which might have an impact on the preservation of the Library's holdings or the health and safety of its users promptly to the Librarian;
- Be involved in advising on building/maintenance works in the spaces where special collections materials are stored, including assisting in the plans for any collection moves either permanent or temporary, with the intention of balancing optimised environmental conditions with the delivery of a service to users;
- Liaise with the Cambridge College Conservation Consortium (CCCC) when necessary;
- Have due regard for the security of the collections;
- Lead on the production and development of a Disaster Plan for the Library and its collections, insofar as this Plan relates to areas in which permanently retained special collections materials are stored;
- Catalogue as required (including modern library books) to relevant Cambridge bibliographical standards, including reporting holdings to the English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC), and recording

provenance notes and bindings descriptions;

- On occasion act as courier for installations/de-installations of manuscripts on loan, including overseas, at the Librarian's request.

3. Collections: Promotion and Display

- Ensure best practice in the curation of collections to enable greater awareness and understanding of the College's collections as part of the College's overall mission;
- Collaborate with the Librarian and the Archivist in the development of exhibitions to interpret the College's historic and archival material;
- Lead tours and give talks to groups from a wide variety of audiences about the Library and its collections when required by the Librarian;
- Work with the Librarian to create and maintain an appropriate web presence regarding the special collections;
- Assist in the planning of external and College events in the Library;
- Assist with requests for filming in the Library in liaison with the Librarian, and oversee and invigilate filming;
- Contribute to the Library's social media offering, by suggesting collection material to feature and writing accessible content;
- Support the Librarian in the development of a digitisation strategy for the special collections, contributing to prioritisation and planning. Develop and manage digitisation workflows including storage and metadata creation
- Support the Librarian in assessing and responding to requests to loan material from the Special Collections to external exhibitions

4. Other Duties

- Represent the Librarian on College Committees where appropriate, attending and producing reports when required on the areas outlined above for the Historical Collections Committee.
- Carry out other reasonable and appropriate duties as requested by the Librarian;
- Assist in the Working Library when necessary;
- Occasional evening and weekend work may be required.

Person Specification

Set out below are the qualifications, experience, skills and knowledge that are the minimum essential requirements for the role or are desirable additional attributes.

	Essential	Desirable
Qualifications, Knowledge and Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A good honours graduate with a professional library or archival postgraduate qualification, or equivalent experience in a relevant professional post • Some practical experience of working with special collections (manuscripts, archives, rare books) is essential • Knowledge of historical bibliography and/or palaeography • Cataloguing experience, and knowledge of DCRM(B) and/or ISAD (G) cataloguing standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project management experience • Knowledge of the antiquarian book trade • Experience of acting as a courier • Experience of planning exhibitions • Knowledge of British and European cultural and social history • A working knowledge of Latin, or the willingness to develop this.
Skills, Abilities and Competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to work both independently and in a team • A helpful and friendly manner • Excellent oral and written communication skills, including the ability to communicate complex ideas to a wide range of audiences • Ability to work to deadlines and flexibly manage changing priorities • Information technology skills, including web-based skills • Ability to lift and carry heavy books and manuscripts • Ability to use library steps and ladders 	

Terms & Conditions

Post: Special Collections Librarian

Length of post: Permanent

Hours of work: 36.25 hours per week

Salary: The salary for the post will be between £41,944 — £47,208 p.a. (depending on experience) plus benefits

Location: The role is based at St John's College in Cambridge.

Contractual benefits include:

- Membership of a Defined Contribution Pension Scheme after a qualifying period
- Additional Christmas salary payment
- Annual leave of 36 working days (inclusive of Bank Holidays)

Other benefits include:

- Free lunch in the College's Buttery Dining Room (subject to a monetary limit)
- Access to a private healthcare scheme currently provided by BUPA
- Access to a 'cash plan' healthcare scheme currently provided by Simplyhealth which provides some financial assistance towards the cost of everyday health expenses such as sight tests or dental check-ups after a qualifying period
- Free car parking close to the College (subject to availability)
- Free use of an on-site Gym
- Free life cover

Read more about the benefits of working at [St John's](#).

The appointment will be subject to an initial probationary period of nine months during which the appointment may be terminated by one month's notice on either side. Following the successful completion of the probationary period, the period of notice is three months on either side.



Recruitment Process

The deadline to apply is **9.00am** on **Monday 14 April 2025**. Interviews are expected to be held in **early May 2025**.

Please include in your application:

- A fully completed application form
- A covering letter summarising why you believe yourself to be suitable for the role and why the role appeals to you
- Details of two referees, one of whom should have detailed knowledge of your ability in regards to the requirement of the role
- A full and up to date c.v.

Applications should be sent:

by email to: recruitment@joh.cam.ac.uk

or by post to: HR Department, St John's College, Cambridge, CB2 1TP

For an informal discussion about the role, please contact the Librarian, Tanya Kirk, at tanya.kirk@joh.cam.ac.uk.

In applying for this role, you will provide personal data which the College will process in accordance with its data protection obligations and its Data Protection Policy. Please see attached for a copy of our Data Protection Statement for further information about how we process your personal data.

Library and Archives
St John's College
Cambridge CB2 1TP
United Kingdom

Registered charity number 1137428

