

**Cultural Career Learning Event**  
**April 5, 2017**  
**Cultural Organization Information Resource**

**What is a cultural organization?**

Cultural organizations are companies that produce or promote the visual, literary and performing arts such as museums, theaters and libraries, as well as public-oriented science and humanities institutions such as zoos, botanical gardens, and historic and preservation societies. These organizations are generally not for profit institutions although some for-profit organizations do exist.

**Why work at a cultural organization?**

Cultural organizations cover a wide range of interests and areas in which to work. These organizations may have a specific focus (i.e. transit, modern art, a particular period in history) or they may also have opportunities to explore many different areas of interest (a play could be about the French Revolution or it could be about baseball). These organizations all allow for very varied day to day tasks. So many people contribute to the operation of a cultural organization. The varied skills and tasks are highlighted in the department descriptions below.

**What are cultural organizations looking for in employees?**

- Interest in and passion for the mission of the organization and the culture it shares
- Past, relevant experience in some aspect of the job (volunteer, internship, etc.)
- Customer service experience
- Clear communication and follow up
- Timely response

**Tips for contacting cultural organizations:**

- Do your research! Find out what the organization does, who the best person to contact may be, and what they offer before you contact them.
- Be specific! State what you are looking for as specifically as possible. Be up front about what you are hoping to gain from the interaction. Are you seeking employment for a particular open position? Are you seeking an informational interview with someone?
- Follow directions! In job postings, organizations will state how they wish to be contacted. Some may say, "No phone calls." Respect their wishes and follow the instructions given.
- Use your connections! If you know someone who works at the organization you are contacting, or you participate in a recreation program at the organization, be sure to let them know you are contacting the organization. You may ask them to do an email introduction with someone else if you are seeking an informational interview.

### **Suggested next steps following this event:**

- **Schedule an informational interview:** Research an organization you are interested in and contact them to schedule an informational interview. It never hurts to meet people and learn more. Informational interviews are brief meetings to gather information about a person's job, career path, and the organization in which they work. These are not job interviews and you should not ask for a job in these meetings. Be respectful of the person's time. Have questions prepared. Send a thank you note after the meeting.
- **Volunteer at an organization of interest:** Forming a relationship with an organization you are interested in is a great way to make connections and build experience that will then help you when you apply for a job.
- **Apply for an internship:** Many organizations offer internship programs. They are a great way to gain experience in the cultural field and learn the skills necessary for future employment. Some internship programs offer opportunities to learn about other jobs at the organization which is a great way to learn more about what you may be interested in for the future.
- **Connect with an employment support organization:** If you are not already connected with an organization that provides job coaching and other employment support services, contact one to support your job search. These organizations are extremely helpful and may have connections to cultural organizations.
- **Research educational programs:** Many of these fields have higher education programs designed for specific study in these areas. Study in these areas is not always required but may be of interest and benefit to a job seeker.

### **Where to look for jobs at cultural organizations:**

[www.idealists.org](http://www.idealists.org)

[www.nyfa.org](http://www.nyfa.org)

[www.playbill.com](http://www.playbill.com)

[www.indeed.com](http://www.indeed.com)

[www.nycmer.org](http://www.nycmer.org)

<http://artjobs.artsearch.us/>

## **What are the different departments/jobs available at cultural organizations?**

Each cultural organization is different with different employment opportunities and varied ways of categorizing and naming those departments. Online research is recommended to investigate the organization to which you are applying so that you may better understand the structure of that organization. Smaller organizations tend to have fewer departments with employees handling the duties of several departments. At smaller organizations there may also only be one person in each department. At large organizations there may be many employees in each department all doing different, specified jobs. Below is a general breakdown of common departments at cultural organizations.



### **Administration/Executive Office**

**Main Responsibilities:** This department is responsible for the management of the company including but not limited to overseeing staff, financial oversight, strategic planning, and contracts and procedures. Administrative staff may help with the day to day operations of these activities. There are many roles at cultural organizations that serve as administrative support. Generally, there are personal assistants and department assistants. Personal assistants report to those they are assisting while department assistants are part of their department and generally report to the department head or manager within that department.

**Possible Titles:** Director, Manager, Associate, Coordinator, Assistant, Receptionist, Office Manager

**Necessary Skills:** Organization, strategic planning, attention to detail



### **Marketing and Communications**

**Main Responsibilities:** The marketing and communications department is responsible for promoting the organization and bringing the public to the organization as visitors and audience members. The department often manages the creation print materials, oversees the website, creates and coordinates e-mail marketing, and places ads in various outlets. This department may coordinate with outside agencies to carry out these activities or may do everything in house. This department is also responsible for public relations, managing the media for the organization. The department tracks tickets sales and often collaborates on visitor/audience engagement efforts. This department is also often responsible for the organization's social media accounts (i.e. facebook, twitter, instagram).

**Possible Titles:** Director, Manager, Associate, Coordinator, Assistant, PR Representative, Graphic Designer

**Necessary Skills:** Organization, attention to detail, creative thinking, strong writing skills, data management



### **Digital Media**

**Main Responsibilities:** Digital Media departments may be responsible for a number of projects depending on the initiatives of cultural institutions. Some projects may include managing the digital presence of the institution on a website or through other online initiatives like digital courses or scholarly resources. The

Digital Media department may collaborate with other departments to assist them in digitizing their resources. The Digital Media department may also execute computer and html coding for the institution's digital platforms.

**Possible Titles:** Graphic Designer, Website Coordinator, Social Media Coordinator

**Necessary Skills:** Organization, strategic planning, coding, ability to work independently and as part of a team



### **Development and Fundraising**

**Main Responsibilities:** The Development department is responsible for fundraising, seeking donations to support the work of the organization. Donations come from individuals, foundations, and the government. When applying to foundations and government agencies, individuals who work in the development

department write applications and proposals. Individual giving requires letters, emails, and other communication with those who may give money to the organization. Special events also play a role in development. Often, donors are invited to events for the organization helping them feel more connected to the work of the institution. Duties may range from direct contact with donors to stuffing envelopes for mailings and preparing materials for events.

**Possible Titles:** Assistant, Individual Giving Officer, Major Gifts Officer, Institutional Giving Officer, Special Events Coordinator

**Necessary Skills:** Attention to detail, strong written communication skills, customer service skills, neat presentation and courteous demeanor when dealing with donors



### **Human Resources**

**Main Responsibilities:** Human Resources is responsible for the personnel, the employees at an organization. They lead the hiring process for new employees, manage the paperwork associated with hiring new employees, coordinate benefits such as health insurance for all employees, and ensure that company policies are

being followed. Human Resources also organizes events and activities to raise company morale and employee well-being. They make sure employees feel comfortable and respected.

**Possible Titles:** Assistant, Manager, Associate, Director

**Necessary Skills:** Training and certification in Human Resources practices and procedures, knowledge of hiring paperwork, attention to detail, discretion and confidentiality



### **Finance/Business**

**Main Responsibilities:** This department oversees and manages the monetary transactions for the company. They track money coming in and money going out. This department is responsible for managing and tracking the budget, processing payments to vendors and employees, and daily cash flow. The department is generally divided into accounts payable - money going out, and accounts receivable - money coming in. The department is also responsible for processing payroll.

**Possible Titles:** Director, Manager, Associate, Assistant, Payroll Administrator

**Necessary Skills:** Organization, attention to detail, working knowledge of excel and other databases



### **Information Technology (IT)**

**Main Responsibilities:** The Information Technology department is responsible for maintaining and managing information technologies within an institution like computer hardware, computer software, and telecommunication systems. The information technology department provides technologies and maintains technologies for all departments within the institution.

**Possible Titles:** Webmaster, Administrator, Coordinator, Director

**Necessary Skills:** Proficiency in computer software and hardware maintenance, good problem-solving skills, fast response



### **Education**

**Main Responsibilities:** The education department is responsible for outreach to young people and adults in order to engage them more deeply in the work of the organization. These programs may include school partnerships, school group visits to the organization, family programming, adult education programs, and outreach to other community groups. Often there are teaching artists, freelance artists who teach in the education programs, who work with the education department and are hired for individual projects. Duties of those in the education department may include preparing workshop supplies, developing lessons and curriculum, coordinating with schools and teaching artists, and developing educational guides and materials.

**Possible Titles:** Education Assistant, Coordinator, Museum Educator, Teaching Artist, Program Manager

**Necessary Skills:** Interpersonal skills, attention to detail and ability to multitask, experience leading or teaching workshops, database management, schedule coordination, inventory and supply management/organization



### **Access**

**Main Responsibilities:** Although Accessibility may be housed in different departments (for example: Education, Guest Services, Human Resources), this group is focused on both making sure the facilities, website and programs are accessible for people with disabilities. Often this team also manages accessibility awareness training and outreach programs designed for people with disabilities.

**Possible Titles:** Access Assistant/Coordinator/Manager/Director; Special Needs Assistant/Coordinator/Manager/Educator

**Necessary Skills:** Interpersonal skills, communication skills, attention to detail and ability to multitask, experience with disability/accessibility, experience teaching and/or leading workshops



### **Visitor/Audience/Guest Services:**

**Main Responsibilities:** This department is responsible for making the visitors/audiences feel welcome, informed, and comfortable. They interface with the public helping to provide information about the activities of the cultural organization and information about the building and location of different spaces (exhibits, restrooms, exits, gift shop, etc.). At a theater, audience services is responsible for subscriber and ticket-related customer service handling ticket exchanges, questions about different productions, and general questions from audience members prior to attending the theater. At many museums, this department oversees admissions, visitor information, visitor research, attendance projection, and tourism outreach. Some positions within this department may be responsible for data entry, filing, and mailings.

**Possible Titles:** Representative, Director, Manager, Assistant

**Necessary Skills:** Interpersonal skills, communication skills, attention to detail and ability to multitask



### **Curatorial**

**Main Responsibilities:** A curator specializes in the content of the museum. Those at art museums have generally studied art history while those at a botanical garden will likely have studied botany (the study of plants). Curators are responsible for the collection, preservation and display of objects and art. Museum curators analyze, catalog, and create written descriptions of the work and research topics related to their collections. Most curators have graduate degrees and many have earned a Ph.D.

**Possible Titles:** Chief Curator, Director, Administrator

**Necessary Skills:** Content knowledge in the focus area of the museum, detail oriented, communication skills - both written and verbal

### **Artistic/Programming**

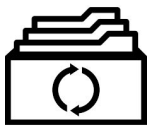


**Main Responsibilities:** This department is usually associated with a performing arts venue or a public programs department within a museum. This department is responsible for choosing all types of live performance - theater, dance, and music - or lectures, panels, and informational programs to be presented at the venue.

Employees in this department do a lot of research, learn about all kinds of performances and presenters, and travel to see shows during the year to put together a diverse season that audiences will enjoy. They also must create contracts for the performers and work with the business office to process their payments. They also work with the space (operations team) to coordinate the needs for the performance or program.

**Possible Titles:** Producer, Director, Associate, Assistant

**Necessary Skills:** Interpersonal skills, communication skills, online research skills, knowledge of field of programming (can be music, theater, dance, etc. - depends on the organization's needs)



### **Archives**

**Main Responsibilities:** The responsibilities of archives departments vary from institution to institution. The main activities of the department are preservation, research, and maintaining a catalogue of the collection. Evaluate new acquisitions/collections (material to be donated), identify preservation concerns

and resources needed for processing new material, create a plan of action and timetable for work on a collection, collect and store data on the items in the collection, and coordinate with the curatorial department when works are going on view in the museum. Many archivists have degrees in museum studies, library and information studies, archival studies, history, or a closely related field.

**Possible Titles:** Archivist, assistant archivist, collection manager, research archivist, archive technician

**Necessary Skills:** Ability to work productively, both independently and in teams, attention to detail, written and verbal communication skills, organizational skills, research skills, able to manage multiple work processes and projects simultaneously, knowledge of practices for handling items in the collection



### **Merchandise and Retail**

**Main Responsibilities:** Many museums and other cultural organizations have gift shops and restaurants in their facilities that are operated by the institution.

Merchandise and retail employees are responsible for the management and sale of the items in these shops. There may also be an online component. Duties include taking inventory and making sales.

**Possible Titles:** Sales associate, manager, inventory specialist

**Necessary Skills:** Customer service, responsible with money, organization, attention to detail



### **Facilities/Operations/Maintenance**

**Main Responsibilities:** This department is responsible for the buildings that the institutions occupy. Responsibilities may include maintenance which is the cleaning of the building, repairs, and space set up for events (setting up furniture, podiums, microphones, etc.). This department may also be responsible for space rentals, room reservations, and coordination with contractors and other professionals who may need to do work on the space. Operations may also include office management.

**Possible Titles:** Maintenance staff, facilities staff, messenger, office manager, operations manager, receptionist

**Necessary Skills:** Attention to detail and conscientiousness, good physical condition and strength, knowledge of safe and hygienic building maintenance practices, patience, responsive



### **Front of House**

**Main Responsibilities:** Front of house staff may include house management, ushers, and box office staff. These positions may be present at performing arts venues and concert halls but box office staff and ticket takers may also be present in museums. Many museums also have theaters. Some of these positions, like part time ushers, are scheduled on an event by event basis and must be available to work during matinee, evening, and weekend performances. These employees may greet patrons, assist with mobility devices and seating, distribute programs and materials, take tickets, and maintain order throughout the performance. Box office staff may be responsible for selling tickets, handling financial transactions, ticketing groups, and printing and distributing tickets.

**Possible Titles:** Usher, Box Office Representative, House Manager, Treasurer, Ticket Services

**Necessary Skills:** Proven customer service experience. Excellent interpersonal and communication skills. Ability to multi-task and problem solve in a fast-paced environment. Able to work on weekends and/or weekdays as the scheduling needs dictate, flexibility. Deference to supervisors and willingness to ask for help when difficult situations arise.



### **Technicians**

**Main Responsibilities:** Primarily in the performing arts, the technicians are responsible for a wide array of duties behind the scenes or backstage. Technicians may specialize in lighting or electrics, wardrobe, sound, set which may include carpentry or being a stagehand, hair (wigs) and makeup, and many other areas.

Technicians undergo training both in theater and the areas in which they work. Many learn through apprenticeship as well as schooling. Most technicians are members of a union called IATSE - International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees.

**Possible Titles:** Electrician, Master Electrician, Wardrobe Supervisor, Seamstress, Head Carpenter, Spotlight Operator, Audio Engineer, Production Sound Engineer, Props Master

**Necessary Skills:** Craftsmanship in the given area, willingness to learn new methods/technology, attention to detail, persistence, ability to work with a team, follow directions, and problem solve. Some jobs follow a clear plan with consistent routine, others have more improvisation.





### **Security**

**Main Responsibilities:** The security staff is often, but not always, contracted through an outside company. Security is responsible for maintaining the safety of those visiting the organization, those working at the organization, and the artwork the organization holds. Security helps the organization enforce the rules (i.e. no photography, no food or drink, no touching the art) in a way that makes the public feel welcome and comfortable. Many of the security staff can also answer visitor questions.

**Possible Titles:** Security Officer/Guard

**Necessary Skills:** Training in security practices, interpersonal skills, patience, vigilance and attention