



Royal Anthropological Institute

Collections Assistant: Archives and Photographs

Location: London (in office). Due to the nature of the work this role is not suitable for remote or hybrid working.

Contract: Part time, permanent

Hours: 2 days per week, working pattern may be negotiated

Start date: Early June 2026

Pay: £29,694 pro rata (£11,877.60)

About the role

The RAI are seeking to appoint a Collections Assistant to support the care of its archival and photographic collections. The Collections Assistant will work alongside the Archivist and Photographic Curator, focusing on the cataloguing, digitisation, and storage of uncatalogued and newly accessioned material.

The successful candidate will have experience in working with archive or museum collections, experience or interest in digitising historic photograph collections, and an interest in anthropology.

Key responsibilities

- To support the Archivist and Photographic Curator in organising collections and identifying appropriate structures and approaches to cataloguing them.
- To catalogue archival and photographic collections to ISAD (G) and SPECTRUM standards using the RAI's FileMaker database and in-house archive cataloguing system.
- To identify items which may need additional levels of care or discussion e.g. fragile, damaged, or ethically complex documents or photographs.
- To digitise historic photographic collections using scanning equipment.
- To pack archival and photographic collections for safe handling and storage.



- To support the Archivist and Photographic Curator with day-to-day collections care and management including: supervising visitors to the collection; fulfilling publication requests for images; moving and rehousing collections, supporting exhibitions, acquisitions, and loans; and integrated pest management (IPM).

Essential Criteria

- Experience of working, in a paid or voluntary capacity, with archival or photographic collections, ideally in an archive or museum setting.
- Undergraduate degree level education or equivalent professional experience in the archive, museum, or heritage sectors
- Awareness and understanding of collections care practices and cataloguing standards e.g. SPECTRUM or ISAD (G).
- Willingness to learn and apply in-house documentation standards and procedures.
- Confidence with common office software including Excel, and willingness to learn to use Collections Management Systems.
- Awareness of ethical and copyright concerns in relation to historic and World Cultures collections.
- Manual dexterity for handling fragile items.
- Careful attention to detail, and confidence in producing accurately written and numbered records.
- Ability to maintain focus during repetitive tasks.
- Ability to work independently, and to organise time and workload.
- Ability to work as part of a small team.

Desirable Criteria

- Experience of cataloguing archival or photographic collections to ISAD (G) or SPECTRUM standards using a Collections Management System.



- Experience of packing archival or photographic collections for safe handling and storage.
- Experience digitising archival or photographic collections.
- Experience using photo editing software.
- An undergraduate or postgraduate qualification in anthropology, archive management, museum studies, or similar.
- Interest in anthropology and the history of anthropology.

About the Royal Anthropological Institute Collections

The Royal Anthropological Institute is a learned society, founded in its present form in 1871. Today, it has around 1850 members and Fellows, and a busy and varied programme of events, publications, conferences, and related initiatives.

The RAI cares for large and diverse collections. These comprise institutional archives recording the history of the institute and anthropology in the UK and a manuscript collection which includes fieldnotes, maps, transcripts, and other research materials from anthropologists working across the globe over the past 150 years. The photographic collections number over 120,000 images ranging from 19th century colonial documentary images to recent field photographs across formats including glass-plate negatives, prints, film, and born-digital material. The collections also include historic films, and a smaller number of original artworks and objects.

The RAI regularly welcomes researchers and visitors to its collections as well as licensing images for publication. We also receive new collections each year.

How to Apply

Please submit a cover letter (maximum two pages) and your CV to the Assistant Director of Administration at admin@therai.org.uk, using the subject line: Collections Assistant Application – [Your Name].

Applications should be submitted by **Thursday 2 April 2026**.

Interviews will be held toward the end of April 2026.