Overview

In the spring of 2013 the UGA Special Collections Libraries will launch a docent training program to extend the reach and accessibility of our new facility. We would like to invite members of the Athens community to be the first participants in this new program.

We will accept applications through Friday, February 8, 2013; In-person interviews for finalists will be scheduled during the week of February 11th. Chosen candidates will be notified by Friday, February 15th.

Training Scope/Schedule

Training will take place during a ten week period this spring from February 19th to April 23rd. The program will consist of weekly training sessions, held on Tuesdays from 10AM-12PM.

Led by members of the Special Collections staff, early content sessions will largely focus on the mission, collections, and work of the Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, the Brown Media Archives and Peabody Awards Collection, and the Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies. Trainees will become more familiar with these libraries and the items on exhibit in their respective galleries. Subsequent sessions will provide information about the building itself, the storage vault, research policies and procedures, and acquaint trainees with the various event and classroom spaces, their equipment, and ongoing and upcoming programs and events.

In addition to building content knowledge of the libraries and exhibits, docents will receive instruction on how to engage with visitors, to create tours for specialized groups, and handle difficult questions. Following the training period, docents will be evaluated and cleared to lead tours. Docents will commit to one year of volunteer service giving tours or providing assistance at special events and programs. A minimum of 20 hours of service will be required during this twelve month period.

Note: Volunteers should be comfortable with public speaking at the outset, but subsequent instruction and practice can help enhance their ability to create engaging tours for the public.
Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Required Time Commitment for the Docent Program?

Trainees must commit to missing no more than 1 session during the ten week training period. If you must miss more than 1 session, you may bring your case to the attention of the Docent Coordinator (Jan Levinson) for consideration by the Docent Committee.

If a training session is missed, a docent trainee must:

- contact the Docent Coordinator (in advance, when possible) to notify her of the absence and to obtain session materials

- prepare for and be tested on this material at the next training session

Once cleared for service, Docents will be required to fulfill a minimum of 20 tour hours during the next year. If scheduling conflicts prevent a docent from giving enough tours to meet this minimum, they may contact the Docent Coordinator to arrange for alternative volunteer opportunities.

One tour will be equivalent to one hour of volunteer service. If needed, these service hours can be performed through volunteer service at programs and special events sponsored by the Special Collections Libraries.

What is the Required Reading for the Docent Training?

Participants will receive a docent handbook, containing overview information on the Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscripts Library, Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies, and the Walter J. Brown Media Archives and Peabody Awards Collection, as well as the exhibits currently on display in the galleries of the Special Collections Building.

Additional information will be added to the handbook as needed (ex. changing exhibitions). Participants will be responsible for reviewing this information on their own and will be tested during subsequent sessions. The notebook will also contain a set of optional readings focused on docent training and tips for giving tours drawn from outside sources.
Evaluation Process: How Do We Know When You’re Ready to Give Tours?

First, participants will take the quizzes on each of the content of sessions delivered. Questions for these will be developed by the content providers who lead the sessions. These are meant to be quick exercises that participants engage in during the first 15 minutes of training and give a sense of how much information has been retained. Scores will be shared with the participants.

The final test will be administered on the last training day (April 23rd) for 30 minutes. This will serve as a litmus test -- helping us to understand what information seems to have been retained the best, what delivery systems worked or didn’t, and what if any follow up training might be needed.

In addition to these written tests, participants will be required to:
- Shadow at least two regular tours during the training period
  - The “Tour at 2” is our regularly weekly tour of the galleries which is open to the public each Tuesday from 2-3PM. Trainees should plan to attend at least two of these tours during the training period, shadowing the guide to study their style and delivery.

- Co-lead 1 tour of the galleries with other docent trainees
  - This means the trainee will share responsibility for a 1 hour tour with 2 other docent trainees. Each trainee will lead a tour of one gallery of their choice.

- Independently lead 1 “checkout” tour of the galleries
  - This means the trainee will lead a solo 1 hour tour of all three gallery spaces. They will give the tour to selected members of the docent committee, who will provide feedback and recommend their clearance for giving regular tours.

Docents will sign a contract committing to the following:

Agree to be absent from no more than one training sessions, to obtain training materials for any sessions missed, and to be tested on this content at the next scheduled training session.

Agree to a minimum one-year commitment following their training period

Commit to a minimum of 20 hours of service in the year following the training period.

Willing to be evaluated by the Docent Committee during their first month giving tours, and periodically thereafter

Agree to maintain neutrality during all interactions with visitors, with regard to all historic topics
Must be open to working with a diverse group of visitors and adapt tours to fit the needs of these groups (ranging from fifth grade students to adults).

Must be dependable and ready to serve as an ambassador to the public and project a positive image of the Special Collections Libraries.