

6 Hints and Tips: Volunteering

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By now I'm guessing you have all been badgered about getting experience and becoming a "well rounded individual"; whether you're a first, second or third year, experience is always useful to have. The easiest way to get experience is by volunteering.

Many people associate volunteering with making cups of tea or looking after old people but it needn't be like that, especially within the archaeological industry. Depending on where your interest lies there are so many places that open their doors to volunteers and are especially keen to take on students. The main area for volunteering within archaeology is really Museums. In York particularly you can get placements at the York Castle Museum, Jorvik Centre, DIG, Barley Hall and the Yorkshire Museum of Farming. You can also look into volunteer placements at the Minster Library if you are interested in archiving.

In terms of digging, if you want to volunteer on a site the best way to go about this is by asking. A simple email or phone call will tell you if they are taking volunteers or not, many field schools who charge for their digs will sometimes take you on as a volunteer the following year as I have found. Ask your supervisor if they are undertaking any fieldwork this year (particularly over the summer) and keep an eye on the department newsletter and the Posthole for notices about volunteering opportunities. You can also check on the internet; Current Archaeology publish a list of fieldwork each year (although many of these are paid field schools) so checking this is always an excellent idea.

If you're interested in something completely different then the place to start is the careers website. York have an excellent careers service and you really can do everything, from volunteering in a school to working with defendants as a mentor. Visit the careers website or book an appointment.

My advice if you are looking to get some experience would be to look into this term and apply before Easter as you are more likely to get a placement this way. Some places will already be filled, especially those in the more popular places, but it never hurts to try: being persistent can show that you are keen and they will remember you. If you have to fill in an application form, treat it like a real job, if they ask you to answer questions such as give examples to when you have worked well in a team try to relate it to what your applying for – this will impress and give you a foot in the door so you can dazzle them with your charms. Most volunteering places do not require an application form or interview but a few do: Jorvik interview their candidates, but this is only an informal chat to ensure you are still keen to go ahead with the placement. Its easier than you expect and the sooner you start the sooner your experience will grow and when you leave university your experience gives you something to put you ahead of other candidates with the same qualifications as you.

Volunteering

- Jorvik Viking Centre (<http://tinyurl.com/9w4xvs>)
- York Castle Museum (<http://tinyurl.com/8totpl>)

- University of York Careers Service – Community and Volunteering Unit (<http://tinyurl.com/8yf6km>)
- The National Trust (<http://tinyurl.com/7kabz6>)