Volunteer Role Description: ‘Space for Reading Volunteer’ (Weston Library)

*The Space for Reading* is an area with comfortable seating and books in the main entrance hall (Blackwell Hall) of the Weston Library, Broad Street. It is about making the Weston Library a friendlier place, supporting work with community partners and highlighting links to its current exhibitions. Visitors can relax, take refreshment and dip in to some reading material which also relates to a current exhibition. Small-scale, organised activities and events occasionally take place in this area. These are likely to be co-created in partnership with relevant community groups and be led by either library staff or community group leaders.

We are looking for volunteers to help welcome visitors in to the space and encourage browsing and interaction with the books. *The current theme of the books in Space for Reading is ‘Travellers’ Tales,’* complementing the current Exhibition ‘Chaucer Here and Now’. If you are someone who enjoys meeting and communicating with diverse people of all ages and backgrounds, who loves reading or has a general curiosity about the world – we would love to hear from you.

The role includes:

- welcoming the public into the space, explaining it if necessary (ie. theme and relationship to exhibition and Bodleian Library), giving them time and space to explore the books available.
- Supporting evaluation by observing and noting how visitors use the space, getting visitors to respond to surveys.
- encouraging people to take down books and read them, to engage in any activities (if and when available) which relate to the books (e.g. family friendly activities or object-handling).
- looking after the space – returning books to shelves, keeping inventory.
- enjoying getting to know the related exhibition and books during quiet times, so that you can converse with visitors or make recommendations.
- Supporting any organised/advertised activities going on by being welcoming, joining in!

If volunteers are keen, the role could include bringing ideas to engage communities with the *Space for Reading*, working with the staff team to make them happen (e.g. running a book group, poetry session, craft activity).

**Timing and Commitment**

We plan to recruit a small pool of volunteers to support the Space for Reading. We particularly need help at weekends but other weekday sessions are also available. Volunteers will be able to sign up for morning *(10.00 am – 1.00 pm)* or afternoon *(1.00 – 4.00 pm)* slots as desired. Volunteers will be coordinated by Neil Stevenson, Public Engagement Manager at the Bodleian Libraries, and on the day they can also seek support from Front of House staff.

We are looking for volunteers who:

- will embrace the opportunity to welcome people into the Weston Library for the first time, as well as people who feel comfortable and confident being there.
- have a friendly personality and enjoy interacting and including people of all ages and backgrounds, and from around the world.
- enjoy reading and have a curiosity about the world.
- has basic speaking skills in English, which will be the common language.
- will enjoy the variety associated with helping in a library ‘front of house’ role and won’t mind that sometimes it is quieter or busier than at other times.
Why volunteers might enjoy this opportunity:
- engage with some beautiful and fascinating books; learn about a variety of topics. The current topic is wellbeing, in the summer the theme will be books about the senses, and later in the year the theme will be ‘Hidden voices’.
- a chance to connect with visitors, volunteers and staff at Bodleian Libraries
- learn about how the public engage with a community library, developing communication and customer service skills.

Induction and training
A briefing session will be held at the Weston Library on Saturday 13th January (2-3 pm), although we may be able to organise another session. Spaces will be limited. Following the briefing, volunteers can sign up for a taster/practice session with a member of staff before both parties decide whether they wish to carry on in the role.

Other practicalities
- At quiet times volunteers will be able to engage in their own reading or work
- This can be a seated role, and the room has direct access and flat entry from Broad Street. Blue badge holders can park on the street nearby.
- Volunteers can claim reimbursement of travel expenses up to £5.00 per session.
- This opportunity is open to volunteers aged 18+.
- This role does not require a Right to Work check.
- Volunteers will need to register with the GLAM Volunteer Service if they are not already.
- Covid-related safety measures follow government guidance and are regularly updated and this activity will be risk assessed. Wearing a face covering and maintaining social distance is encouraged in this public space but not mandated. Volunteers, like staff, are asked to take lateral flow tests regularly.

Next steps...
If you are interested in getting involved, then please email Joy at volunteering@glam.ox.ac.uk by Wednesday 10 January 2024. In your email please answer the following questions:
1. Can you attend a briefing session at the Weston Library on Saturday 13th January (2-3 pm) if not - we’d still like to hear from you as we may be able to organise another session.
2. In general, which times(s) of the week would you most like to volunteer?
   - No preference – happy to fill in gaps
   - Monday mornings
   - Monday afternoons
   - Wednesday mornings
   - Wednesday afternoons
   - Thursday mornings
   - Thursday afternoons
   - Friday mornings
   - Friday afternoons
   - Saturday mornings
   - Saturday afternoons
3. Why you would like to get involved (a few sentences will be fine!)

We will be in touch in the New Year to confirm your space at the induction/briefing. Attending the briefing/induction does not commit you to volunteering. Depending upon level of interest and people’s availabilities, we may have to select. This will happen following the briefing, as necessary.