



Hello and welcome to GWL.

I'm going to introduce our approach to involving volunteers, which I believe makes GWL stand out from other museums, and share some highlights from 2017 and feedback which demonstrates why our way of working is so impactful for both our volunteers and the organisation.



"I believe in GWL as a fundamental building block in promoting women's contributions to, and place in, our society and culture in the past, present and future."

Volunteering is in GWL's DNA. As an organisation started by a group of determined volunteers, we all know just how vital they are to fulfilling our ambitions. We first secured funding for a dedicated volunteering programme in 2011 which is when I joined the organisation.

The focus of the volunteering project over the past 7 years has been 2 fold:

- involving women who face barriers to volunteering
- increasing the number of ways in which they can contribute.



- Our approach to involving volunteers, like the rest of our work, is embedded in our values. We seek to empower women, to address inequalities, to make all volunteers feel valued, to support their learning and development, and to foster a diverse team.



- Tailoring roles to volunteers unique skills, experiences and interests makes volunteers feel valued for who they are.
- Bel for example is a keen skater. She volunteered on the front desk initially, but soon got involved in curating an exhibition in Edinburgh which showcased our collection of artefacts about Roller Derby .

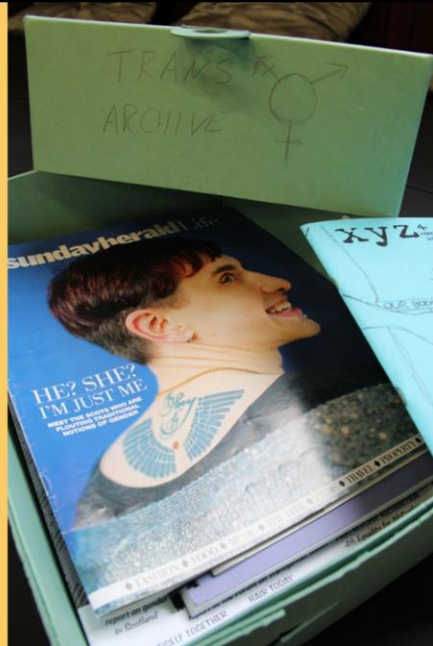


“For me, the best thing about volunteering at GWL is being part of a community of women.”

- Volunteers are truly valued as team members by everyone in the organisation. It’s amazing how quickly volunteers start to refer to GWL as “we” and for me that’s a sure sign that they are proud of and feel part of the organisation.



“If there is anything that interests you specifically [...] they encourage and support you in every way they can.”



- The fact that volunteers (like other visitors and users) see their lives and history reflected in the collection is another aspect of our work which I feel sets us apart from other museums.
- Volunteers help to care for these materials, and they are also key to growing the collection
- The TransArchive for example, was started by our volunteer Eilidh, a young trans woman, who we supported to acquire new materials and add them to the collection.



“The best thing about volunteering is gaining experience in the wonderful collections.”

- This is another example of a volunteer, Lucy, who shared her passion and knowledge of knitting patterns with others at an Open Archive session last year.
- Lucy also helped us to catalogue this well loved collection which so many women can relate to.



“I love the warm and welcoming environment where I feel accepted and supported.”



- Diversity and Inclusion are central to this project. A diverse volunteer team is key to the diversity of our collection and associated programme of activities and to meaningfully engaging with wide-ranging audiences.
- Our volunteers are from all backgrounds and get to meet people they would not meet otherwise.
- Volunteer programme is central to delivering our EDI ambitions
- Having a diverse team is so important. Women don't want to be labelled, they want to support each other and learn from each other



“Volunteering helps my reading, learning about the archives and about history, meeting new people, getting involved in events, learning new skills.”

- In order to maintain a diverse team we will often prioritise recruiting women with little or no work experience, which means we are including women who would otherwise never set foot in a museum and always provides great learning for us as practionners as well as for the volunteers.



2017
Our proudest achievements

- So now I'll now focus a bit more on 2017 and our proudest achievements.
- We saw an unprecedented demand for volunteering and over the year involved 107 women who collectively contributed over 6000 hours and were instrumental in all of the projects you're hearing about today



Collections Volunteering project

- As I've mentioned the collections really speak to our volunteers and there is no shortage of interest in caring for them, but very few were trained or experienced museum professionals.
- Through the Collections Volunteering Project we trained and supported additional volunteers to list and catalogue thousands of items across 12 collections, as well as facilitate six events and curate five exhibitions;



Collections Volunteering project

- This project also focused on increasing the Front of House volunteers' knowledge of our work as a museum. All visitors are now offered tours of the building, are showed into the stores, learn how the collection has grown thanks to donations from thousands of people over the years, and hear about how much the materials are loved and cared for and used almost daily in our programme of events.




Spirit of the Calton funding

- In 2017 we also focused on engaging more women from our local neighbourhood. This coincided with a cross-organisational effort to reach out to more local women, who due to living in an area which falls within the 5% most deprived in Scotland, are not “typical” museum goers.
- I worked closely with 3 organisations who championed GWL amongst their users and resulted in 8 local women volunteering, and local women now making up 18% of our volunteers.




- Another highlight for me last year was when the Seeing Things project took off under the helm of a small group of volunteers. We had previously had a part time worker organising and leading trips but our aspiration had always been that it would be volunteers who would share their love of film, visual art or literature with other women.
- Volunteers now plan, organise and lead two trips each month, and in the past 6 months alone have seen work by dozens of women creatives. For many participants this project has been the starting point for a completely new appreciation and engagement with art and culture.



OUR HISTORY IS VALUABLE

Glasgow Women's Library has one of the largest collections of LGBT History in the UK. At the centre of our collections is the Lesbian Archive and Information Centre Collection (LAIC), a UK-wide collection which captures histories of Lesbian and Gay Activism in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. It contains newsletters, posters, placards, banners, badges, magazines, journals, personal collections, music, film and ephemera documenting the lives of Lesbian women across the UK. From 1st editions of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* to the Camden Lesbian Centre and Black Lesbian Group archive, LAIC is a truly unique collection in Scotland and the rest of the UK.



The Lesbian Archive Project

WE RECRUIT!

We are still finding out more about the materials in this amazing resource. If you are interested in finding out more about the collection, and maybe getting involved in listing please contact us via info@womenslibrary.org.uk



- Another project which we are extremely proud of and which has a long lasting legacy is the Lesbian Archive project which involved a dozen volunteers to create an online resource highlighting the materials. They have consequently become active champions of this collection, and continue to add to it by recording their own activism and contributions.



Recognition

Glasgow Volunteering
Charter Mark achievement
ceremony, January 2017





“My well-being, physical, mental, emotional, all improve when I'm volunteering for GWL. I learn things and I have access to knowledge that I otherwise wouldn't.”

- The benefits of volunteering are well documented but I believe these are enhanced when a volunteering programme puts volunteers at the centre of the organisation.
- Not only do volunteers help us to achieve our aims and objectives, but their personal and professional development, their wellbeing and their sense of purpose are objectives in themselves.



“Being part of the library makes me so proud and I like telling others about it at every chance I get really!”

- And there is no doubt that volunteers who feel valued and feel part of the organisation, results in volunteers who give more to our work than we could ever imagine.
- There are many volunteers here today who we hope you can meet over lunch, and who I’m sure will give you a sense of what makes volunteering with GWL truly life enhancing.



“Volunteering allows me to engage with art in a space where I feel comfortable and confident. Makes me happy just being in the library and feeling part of it.”



- I'd like to end with this quote from one of our volunteers. I think it sums up so well what makes GWL an outstanding museum and organisation. And that's because it's a museum which people feel part of, whether they are visitors, learners, staff or volunteers.
- Thank you very much. I look forward to hearing any questions you might have later.

