Job Title: Head of Service (Museum Data Service)
Grade: 9
Salary: £59,966 to £67,468 pro-rata
Department: School of Heritage and Culture
Hours/Contract: Part-time (0.5 FTE, 18.75 hours per week), fixed term contract from 01 October 2025 till 31 March 2028
Job Family: Management and Administration
Reference: 12168

Role Purpose

The Museum Data Service (MDS) is an innovative new digital infrastructure that aims to make the millions of object records held by UK museums available as FAIR data for reseacrh and countless other uses. The University of Leicester has secured grant funding from AHRC [AH/Z000793/1] to run and develop the service from April 2025 to March 2028, on behalf of the MDS charitable company established by UoL, Art UK and Collections Trust in June 2024. The Head of Service will lead the strategic transition of MDS from start-up to an established and indispensable part of AHRC's digital infrastructure ecosystem (iDAH), laying the foundations for the long-term sustainability of the service.

Resources Managed

The post is funded through the substantial investment through the iDAH programme of the Arts and Humanities Research Council, and forms part of a wider body of work to develop the Museum Data Service over this next funding cycle, to March 2028.

The resources available to the Head of Service will support: the ongoing management and delivery of the routine and responsive technical tasks needed for seamless continuity of service; engagement with the research community to support research projects that can seek to use the MDS; involvement of the wider MDS network in user testing; museum sector networking and advocacy; and onboarding new museums to the MDS.

Main Duties and Responsibilities

Strategic leadership

- Develop and implement the strategic vision and direction for the service, in collaboration with the MDS board and other key stakeholders. This will involve understanding the changing funding and strategic landscape in which the MDS is situated – specifically the growing ecosystem of projects and services that make up the AHRCs infrastructure for data in the arts and humanities, as well as the wider programme of investment within UKRI around digital research infrastructure. The Head of Service will be instrumental in understanding these needs alongside the needs of the research community, and the needs of MDS's museum contributors. The Head will work with MDS's Management Group and the MDS Board to fulfil, and implement changes to, the Service's development and strategic direction.

Team leadership

- Lead and develop the MDS team, comprising the Museum Data Manager and User Engagement Support (employed by Collections Trust and Art UK respectively under a collaboration agreement). The Head of Service will line manage a Technology Manager (at the University of

Leicester), and through the MDS's Oversight Group work closely with the wider team (at Art UK, Collections Trust, and MDS's technical suppliers). The Head of Service will support the MDS Chair in delivering the quarterly Board meetings, will support the Principal Investigator (PI) in the quarterly project reporting to the AHRC, and will take day-to-day supervision and support of the work of the Data Manager (at Collections Trust).

Operational delivery and development

- Oversee the day-to-day operations of MDS (with support from UoL Digital Services where needed), ensuring effective service delivery, and develop the operational plan in the light of experience and user feedback. This will include acting as lead co-ordinator for annual 'MDS Showcase' event, the biannual developers' 'Innovation Days', and the bi-monthly e-newsletter. The Head of Service will also chair the twice-yearly Research and Museum User Groups.

Financial oversight

- Manage the annual budget, ensuring effective resource allocation and reporting to UoL, AHRC and the MDS Board. The Head of Service will work closely with the project PI and with the Post-Award Finance Advisor in the university's Research and Enterprise Division, on managing the expenditure within the AHRC project budget.

Stakeholder engagement

- Build and maintain strong relationships with AHRC, other iDAH infrastructures, major research users and potential users of MDS data, museum sector bodies, international cultural heritage aggregators, and other funding bodies and stakeholders. The Head of Service will attend regular meetings with the N-RICH team at the AHRC, and attend the quarterly meeting of the iDAH cohort of funded trusted data services. The Head of Service will respond to, and actively seek, connections with other international cultural hertaige data aggregators and services, exploring collaboration and knowledge sharing as necessary. As the MDS's day-to-day 'public face', the Head of Service will also respond to approaches from the media, and represent the MDS at relevant conferences and events.

Advocacy and representation

- Act as the primary spokesperson for MDS, representing the service at conferences, workshops, and in the media to raise its profile and influence policy.

Governance and compliance

- Act as the Company Secretary for the MDS charitable company, ensuring legal compliance, providing administrative support to the board, and maintaining the risk register.

Internal and External Relationships

Key internal relationships: Professor Ross Parry (PI of the AHRC-funded iDAH project); Dr Stef De Sabbata (Co-I); UoL Digital Services; UoL Research and Enterprise Division.

Key external relationships: Museum Data Service Board and its Advisory Groups; Arts and Humanities Research Council; Knowledge Integration (core system developer); other iDAH infrastructures; Art UK; Collections Trust; museum sector bodies; international counterparts.

Planning and Organising

With oversight from the PI, the Head of Service will plan and organise the successful delivery of the AHRC grant-funded project up to March 2028. From the outset, this will include planning for the sustainability of the service beyond the end of March 2028, championing compelling use cases and gathering evidence to support future fundraising.

Qualifications, Knowledge and Experience

Essential

- Proven experience in a leadership role within the cultural, heritage, or information management sectors, with a track record of strategic planning and service development.*

- Experience in leading and developing teams, fostering a positive and productive working environment.

- Strong understanding of data management practices, including the principles of FAIR data, and experience with large-scale data initiatives.*

- Demonstrated ability to build and maintain effective partnerships with a diverse range of relevant stakeholders.*

- Strong project management skills, with the ability to oversee complex projects from conception to completion.*

Desirable

- Experience working with, and understanding of, museum collections data.

- Experience in influencing policy and contributing to sector-wide discussions on data management and digital collaboration.

- A good understanding of charity governance, including experience of working with a board of trustees and ensuring compliance with charity law.
- Awareness of the issues around leading a remote team.

Skills, Abilities and Competencies

Essential

- Experienced and confident user of WordPress, Office 365 or equivalents.
- Financial management, including budgeting.*
- Excellent communication skills, both written and verbal.

Desirable

- Experience of CIIM middleware and/or museum collection management systems.
- Advanced data processing skills.

Criteria to be used in shortlisting candidates for interview
Reason for Fixed Term Contract
The reason for the fixed term contract is stated in section 1.9 in the summary of contractual terms in your contract of employment.
Criminal Declaration
If you become an employee, you must inform your manager immediately, in writing, if you are the subject of any current or future police investigations/legal proceedings, which could result in a criminal offence, conviction, caution, bind-over or charges, or warnings.
Supporting University Activities
As a University of Leicester citizen, you are expected to support key university activities such as clearing, graduation ceremonies, student registration and recruitment open days. We expect all staff as citizens to work flexibly across the University if required.
University Values
Inclusive - We are diverse in our makeup and united in ambition. Our diversity is our strength and makes our community stronger. **Inspiring** - We are passionate about inspiring individuals to succeed and realise their ambitions. We challenge our community to think differently, to get involved, and to constantly embrace new ideas. **Impactful** - As Citizens of Change we will generate new ideas which deliver impact and empower our community
Equity and Diversity
We believe that equity, diversity and inclusion is integral to a successful modern workplace. By developing and implementing policies and systems that challenge stereotypes across all aspects of our work, we have a culture that recognises and values the diverse contributions of our staff which benefits everyone. Our strong values of inclusivity and equality support our efforts to attract a diverse range of high-quality staff and students, and identify our University as a progressive and innovative workplace that mainstreams equality, diversity and inclusion.