



**Who are you, where are you based and what do you do?**

Hello! I'm Sarah Pipkin. I work for UCL Special Collections Library as the Outreach and Exhibitions Coordinator and am based on UCL's Bloomsbury campus. I support the development and delivery of teaching sessions, both academic and outreach, using UCL's collection of Rare Books, Manuscripts and Archives. I also lead on the development of library exhibitions for UCL's Main Library and Student Centre, including curating our current exhibition 'Word as Art: Beauty in the Margins.'

**What do you most enjoy about your job?**

I really enjoy working with the collection at UCL. It's a privilege to be able to hold a piece of history in my hands, and I really enjoy bringing items out of the stores so that students, researchers or members of the public can come face to face with a piece of history.

I also love the sheer variety of work – I've seen a lot of our material in a relatively short period of time, mostly because of the different audiences and projects I've worked with. I've been able to push myself and my professional skills and have learned a lot in the year since I started this position.

**What motivates you in your work?**

I'm really inspired by the moment of pure delight when people come into contact with a collection item for the first time. There's something wonderful about looking at something that either relevant to a research project you've been working on for so long, speaks to a part of history, or is just really interesting. The first time I went to a special collections library, I remember being so excited by the fact that I was allowed to see and handle a medieval manuscript. I asked for a student job that day, and I haven't looked back since. I still get excited looking at collection items, and I really enjoy making sure that others can have that opportunity to handle pieces of history.

**How can/has the M25 Consortium supported you in your career?**

It's been a useful source of training sessions, including previous training sessions on managing challenging behavior. I'm currently a member of the Curators' Network, which has been really helpful for understanding how other libraries manage and put together exhibitions.

**What would it surprise people to know about you?**

I'm a big Tolkien fan – I've read all of his works multiple times and they were a big inspiration in me going down a humanities path at university. I taught myself Tengwar, Tolkien's script and alphabet for his different Elven languages, when I was a teenager and it snuck its way into my print handwriting. It's less obvious now than it was when I was younger.

I also have a greyish-brown tabby kitten named Gandalf.

**Complete the sentence: If I wasn't working in a library I would be...** a criminal law attorney because that was my original plan when leaving university! I'm from the US, and had planned on going to law school once I graduated university. I even went as far as taking the LSAT, the entrance exam for law school. However, I decided that working in libraries was a better fit for me. It's still a subject I feel passionate about.

Sarah Pipkin, UCL, 2022