Describe your role and responsibilities in the department you worked for within the Information Services Group?

I am based in the Centre for Research Collections (CRC). My job is comprised of two main roles:

1. I research the University’s Special Collections to uncover stories and images of individuals and groups belonging to marginalised communities – be it due to race, gender or sexual orientation, so these stories can be made available for use by University staff and students.
2. I run outreach initiatives; spreading the findings of my research within and beyond the University community. I run a blog called ‘Diverse Collections’ where I compile posts about archival materials that highlight the variety of experiences contained within the collections. I also give presentations at gender, diversity and equality events around campus (Ada Lovelace Day, International Women’s Day) and organise outreach events within the CRC.

What interested you in this specific role?

As a PhD student, I have consistently been interested in marginalised groups, in particular women. When I applied for the post, I thought this role would give me an opportunity to analyse and research issues of gender from a different perspective, complementing my PhD thesis and broadening its scope. I also thought working in the archives would help me learn how to approach and search the Special Collections for research purposes. Most importantly, though, I felt very excited at the prospect of helping with increased integration of diversity and equality contents in the University’s profile to broaden representation for all staff and students.
What have you learnt from this experience and what impact have you made?

Taking up the post has proven an invaluable learning experience for me. On a practical level, I was given the chance to familiarise myself with the archives and develop strategies for effective research, cataloguing and preservation. I learnt how to handle different types of items, how to access online and offline databases and how to cross-reference sources to provide reliable and thorough research.

I have been able to increase my social media skills by setting up my own blog and contributing to the CRC and library social media channels. This assists in sharing diversity and equality content. I have also gained critical experience in the organisation, funding and management of events and outreach initiatives.

My project has led to the digitisation of numerous photographic sources, which will soon be accessible as open sources, as well as the re-naming of University rooms after important archival figures I researched. In combination with the wider outreach projects carried out throughout the year, by both myself and other interns/groups, this has increased visibility for marginalized individuals and groups fundamental to the University.

How do you plan to use this experience to benefit your future career objectives?

Thanks to the variety of experiences offered by the post, I have gained a number of transferable skills in organisational, administrative and research tasks that will greatly improve my employability in my chosen career path. As a hopeful academic, I believe the ability to successfully gain funding for projects will prove particularly useful, as well the knowledge and expertise acquired in dealing with archival sources as tools for effective research and teaching.

What advice would you give fellow peers/students or graduates looking to get a job with the Information Services Group?

I would say the most important thing is to demonstrate genuine enthusiasm for the project. It is important to understand the impact the role will have on the wider University community and prove you are ready to contribute to the development of the project with plenty of initiative and ideas. Don’t be shy to take the lead and voice your opinions, as these can often become invaluable contributions!