

City of Los Angeles

Curator of Griffith Observatory

(Salary Range: \$116,238 to \$169,942)

The City of Los Angeles seeks a proven, academically credentialed leader in astronomy, astrophysics and/or related scientific fields to

- *Manage all Griffith Observatory programs and associated staff, assets, collections, exhibits, technology, and the website and library resources;*
- *Design, develop, implement, and sustain programs that inspire wonder, advance the public's appreciation for astronomy, and share knowledge of the history, practices and scientific findings of astronomical observation; and*
- *Engage people of all ages, identities, incomes, ability/disability and backgrounds in public astronomy.*

[Griffith Observatory](#) is an icon of Los Angeles, the world's most visited public observatory, and is open six days a week to host 1.5 million visitors annually.

The Observatory was founded by namesake benefactor Griffith J. Griffith to make astronomy accessible to the public. Griffith donated over 3,000 acres to the City of Los Angeles for the Observatory and Park, and the Observatory opened in 1935. Located 1,134 feet above sea level, this unique facility provides a stunning overview of Los Angeles, a clear view of the horizon, and supports free public observing every night that the building is open and skies are clear. The 290-seat Samuel Oschin Planetarium is the third planetarium established in the U.S., and there are over 60 other displays and installations that turn visitors into observers. The City of Los Angeles owns, operates, and largely funds the Observatory and its staff through the Department of Recreation and Parks, and most Griffith Observatory programs are free to the general public. The Curator of Griffith Observatory is a City of Los Angeles employee.

The Observatory's essential partner and collaborator is [Griffith Observatory Foundation](#). The Foundation was chartered as an independent 501c3 fundraising, advocacy, and support organization in 1978 by Debra and Harold Griffith (grandson of the observatory benefactor) and the current Observatory Director Dr. E. C. Krupp. For 48 years, the Observatory and Foundation have worked in unison to advance Griffith Observatory interests. There is a strong culture of collaboration.

The Observatory has an annual budget of roughly \$8 million, which is dedicated almost entirely to staffing costs, with \$900,000 for materials, supplies, and contractual services. The Foundation annually provides about \$2 million to underwrite programs, upgrades, specialty personnel, and specialized expenses, and the Foundation periodically funds major projects at the Observatory. Griffith Observatory employs 24 full-time staff, and over 270 part-time staff whose hours roughly equate to 80-90 FTE. All staff are employees of the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks. The Foundation engages additional staff and volunteers to assist with events, programs and advocacy.

This Curator is the executive team member primarily responsible for the visitor experience of Griffith Observatory programs, educational activities, and exhibits.

BASIC FUNCTION

The Curator is a key leader of one of the most visible and impactful astronomy institutions in the world. In tandem with the Director and Deputy Director, the Curator advances the reputation and iconic place Griffith Observatory has in the community, in public astronomy, and in popular culture, ensures an inspiring visitor experience, and oversees the dissemination of knowledge of astronomy and observation. The Observatory is an iconic place and asset to the people of Los Angeles, and the Curator's teams

function as the “public face” of the institution. The Curator manages the Programming division with five full-time staff responsible for: public & education programming, astronomical observation, lectures, and exhibits, materials, video & social media. Additionally there are over 100 part time staff (amounting to about 50 - 60 FTE staff) that are managed directly or indirectly by the Curator. The full team has responsibility for interpreting exhibits, presenting shows and programs, guiding public telescope observing, and providing administrative support across all programs.

The Curator has several core responsibilities:

- Along with the Director and Deputy Director, set goals and objectives for the Observatory; sustain and shape the Observatory’s reputation;
- Manage the Observatory Programming Branch, including day-to-day operations, workflows, people, physical assets, budgets and funding;
- Plan, develop, implement, and evaluate, directly or through subordinate staff, scientific and educational astronomical programs and programming for people of all ages, backgrounds, and income levels, including students and the general public;
- Operate and enrich the Observatory’s school programs, which largely serve underserved students and teachers, and are primarily funded by the Foundation. Pursue an access-for-all philosophy and innovate to extend educational programs throughout the community through in-person and online resources;
- Collaborate with the Griffith Observatory Foundation to promote Griffith Observatory, its exhibits, programs, and assets; assist the Foundation with fundraising for the Observatory;
- Act as one of the principal spokespersons for the Observatory and help lead its publishing and communication activities (including its longtime monthly magazine).

Other responsibilities include:

MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

- Build, mentor, manage and organize a highly capable staff; foster a culture that rewards initiative, teamwork, accountability and collaboration, and that values those from different backgrounds with a broad range of lived and professional experience; promote foundational competency in connecting with diverse audiences of Los Angeles residents and visitors from across the United States and the world.
- Attend astronomical conferences, meetings, and colloquia to remain current with important scientific developments of interest to Observatory audiences; ensure staff is also appropriately engaged in acquiring new and relevant knowledge aligned to Observatory requirements.
- Serve as a primary spokesperson and “public face” for Griffith Observatory; build relationships with stakeholders critical to the organization’s success, advocate for the Observatory’s mission and work, and promote Griffith Observatory’s scientific and astronomy education programs; help to represent the Observatory in presentations before the Mayor, City Council, Recreation & Parks Commissioners, the Foundation’s Board, various organizations and groups, and to media at press events.

PROGRAMS & EDUCATION

- All regular public programs and public interpretation; special event programs, lectures, presentations, shows, talks, media recording & packaging, documentation and dissemination;

- Theater programming (Samuel Oschin Planetarium shows, LNEH shows/demonstrations, *etc.*), including development of new planetarium and theater shows and programs;
- School programs and curricula, both online and in-person, including working with local school districts and community partners in providing astronomy education to educators; deliver scientific and educational astronomical programs to students that are aligned to the requirements of students of different ages and backgrounds;
- Live and recorded astronomical broadcasts and programs, all online and social media assets and the content areas of the Observatory website;
- Oversight of observing events, partnerships and resources, including special observing opportunities, management of the relationship with Los Angeles Astronomical Society and related partner organizations;
- Writing and editing to support Observatory and Foundation communications and publications, including the *Griffith Observer*, the Observatory's longtime monthly magazine.

EXHIBITS

- Curate and manage the visitor experience and exhibit/audience interactivity
- Design, develop and update all exhibit content and associated programs
- Propose and oversee changes to exhibit philosophy, approach and functionality
- Develop exhibit content and public talks for presentation by staff
- Oversee training of the staff to ensure content is being presented effectively

THEATER AND CLASSROOM SPACES

- Samuel Oschin Planetarium (equipment, experience, and maintenance/upgrades)
- Leonard Nimoy Event Horizon (equipment, experience, and maintenance/upgrades)
- Boeing Classroom (equipment and experience)

OVERSIGHT OF EQUIPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE, INCLUDING TELESCOPES AND INSTRUMENTS

- Zeiss telescope and related instrumentation
- Coelostat and related instrumentation
- Portable telescopes and related instrumentation
- Oversight of the Satellite animation and video production studio
- Video and file servers and equipment, including storage, backup, and maintenance
- Management of all Programming paper records, library resources, and content
- Definition and approval of all purchases of equipment to support this function

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

Candidates must have a Ph.D. degree from an accredited college or university in Astronomy, Physics, or Planetary Science; and four years of full-time paid professional experience at a public observatory, major planetarium, science museum, or related facility supervising staff involved in developing and implementing astronomy and physical science programs and exhibits for the public. Experience in budgeting, program development, management and delivery, and personnel management is strongly desired.

Attributes desired of candidates include:

- Experience communicating effectively with the public and designing accessible and engaging public programs that create a sense of inspiration and wonder in addition to learning and knowledge. A candidate with an innate theatrical sensibility is desired.
- Experience working in the setting of large and complex organizations like a college or university, school system, municipal agencies, research centers and institutes, museums, observatories and such.
- Experience in connecting with, galvanizing the support of, and engaging a very diverse set of communities and interest groups, including ensuring support for allocation of municipal or systems-wide resources to an organization like Griffith Observatory.
- Experience collaborating with support organizations like the Griffith Observatory Foundation, along with the ability to directly solicit donations and grants from individuals, foundations, business and government leaders, while also ensuring that the terms under which such donations are extended align to the public-interest mission of Griffith Observatory.
- Experience with the care, maintenance and upgrade of unique physical facilities and equipment that receive heavy use from the visiting public.

WORKING FOR THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES

The City of Los Angeles is a progressive, equal-opportunity employer with attractive employee benefits that include: competitive salary, comprehensive health insurance, a defined-benefit pension, a deferred compensation program and generous holiday & earned leave provisions.

APPLICATION PROCESS FOR INTERESTED PARTIES

m/Oppenheim is assisting the Observatory and Foundation by providing information on the Curator opportunity and helping interested candidates get answers to questions. The application and selection process, however, will be administered by the City of Los Angeles. The City has opened the application process and interested candidates must complete and submit the [online application](#) as specified by the City job bulletin. A civil service exam, as described in the bulletin, will be provided to qualified applicants by the City of Los Angeles Personnel Department to determine a ranked-order list of candidates. Observatory senior managers will then conduct selection interviews of the highest-ranked candidates from the exam.

The complete position description can be found [here](#). We appreciate any candidate [nominations](#) you have and sharing this opportunity with your networks.

For more information about this opportunity, please contact:

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