

Curator for Research, Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas

Lawrence, Kansas, USA

Application deadline: Mar 16, 2026

Celka Straughn

The Spencer Museum of Art at the University of Kansas is now hiring for a faculty-equivalent Curator for Research position.

Arts Research Integration:

With Arts Research Integration (ARI), the Spencer Museum of Art at the University of Kansas (KU) has established an active hub for collaborative, integrated arts research and a unique model for the academic art museum as a generative research partner. Using curatorial and artistic practice to develop shared questions and new theories, ARI connects the museum, artists, and advanced researchers in the sciences and humanities to promote interdisciplinary practices, generate effective dialogues about subjects that directly impact daily life, and involve the public in ideas and art. The ARI program recognizes that the creation of art is a research methodology in its own right, and one that is critical to the future of research in an academic environment. Research generated by the ARI program fosters reciprocal exchange and the production of knowledge driven by scholars from multiple disciplines. By working beyond the confines of any one particular discipline, curators, artists, and scholars, can practice fluency and criticality in the context of their own subjects. Major recent ARI projects include the interdisciplinary inquiry *Collective Entanglements* that used mathematical analytical tools to explore questions in physics and the composition of video installation, and *here-ing*, an environmentally embedded artwork by Janine Antoni commissioned by ARI in collaboration with the KU Field Station and School of Architecture and Design. Launched with support from the Mellon Foundation (2016-2024), ARI is now sustained by a funded and growing Spencer Museum endowment.

Curator for Research Position:

The Curator for Research is central to building on, maintaining, and advancing a sustainable interdisciplinary arts research infrastructure that harnesses curatorial strengths and the possibilities of a vibrant campus art museum embedded in a division one research university. As a driver of innovative creative projects and serving as a research collaborator and facilitator, the Curator initiates, guides, and supports ARI activities, negotiates relationships across departments and disciplines, fosters long-term partnerships, and disseminates research concepts and findings through a variety of formats. With specialized knowledge extending beyond the visual arts, the Curator for Research activates the Spencer Museum's collection and develops exhibitions and other platforms to engage campus and broader communities with ARI projects.

Working within a team environment, this position promotes dialogue and collaboration within and

beyond the Spencer Museum, serving as an important public intellectual voice in the fields of the arts, humanities, sciences, and technology. Curiosity, active listening, and an openness for learning and new ideas are critical qualities for this position and the various forms of relationship building. As part of the Spencer Museum's curatorial team, the Curator for Research plays a central role in imagining, articulating, and implementing the scholarly and creative vision to present the collection as a living archive that motivates interdisciplinary research, creative work, and transformative public dialogue. Holding a PhD or other terminal degree, the Curator brings experience in interdisciplinary research and collaboration that integrates the arts. This position is open rank and we strongly invite applications from candidates at the assistant, associate, and senior curator levels.

Spencer Museum of Art and University of Kansas:

The Spencer Museum of Art's vision is to stimulate creative thinking and spark new ideas through transformative art experiences. Interdisciplinary exploration at the intersection of art, ideas, and experience is central to the mission. With stewardship of a collection comprising more than 48,000 works of art created across a wide range of time periods, geographic locations, and cultural affiliations, the Spencer Museum strengthens, supports and contributes to the academic research and teaching of KU and is committed to serving communities of learners across Kansas and beyond.

The University of Kansas is located in the city of Lawrence, a thriving community 40 minutes from the Kansas City metropolitan area and 30 minutes from the state capital, Topeka. Lawrence is a progressive college town of 95,000, boasts a lively downtown with many cultural venues, award-winning restaurants, and a nationally celebrated independent bookstore among its many independently owned small businesses. Founded in 1865, KU is a designated Carnegie comprehensive doctoral and research university and is one of only 38 public members of the prestigious Association of American Universities (AAU). The University enrolls more than 30,000 students representing all 50 states and 112 countries.

Culture and Community

KU's excellence is a result of the rich tapestry of experiences, perspectives, and backgrounds of our faculty, staff, students, and colleagues from across our nation and the globe. At KU, we invest in continuous learning and growth by creating a climate where people engage in respectful dialogue and debate and support each other's success. We foster a culture of care where each person is seen, heard and valued. When people feel a true sense of belonging, we believe they are better able to reach their full potential and achieve remarkable things. The successful candidate must be eligible to work in the U.S. by the effective date of the appointment.

Position Duties:

Professional Performance and Research (75%)

- Lead, envision, orchestrate, and nurture ARI programs, such as inquiries, research convenings, exhibitions, and artist commissions, among other collaborative interdisciplinary projects that activate the Museum as a vital research partner and center for scholarly, creative endeavors.
- Cultivate research partners to identify, apply, and integrate diverse methodologies.
- Develop strategies to advance, support, and sustain collaborative and interdisciplinary research efforts across the museum and with academic staff colleagues.

- Foster a vibrant community of artists and scholars in support of the Museum's mission to encourage interdisciplinary exploration at the intersection of art, ideas, and experience.
- Advocate for artistic research priorities.
- Actively maintain an awareness of and contribute to scholarship on interdisciplinary collaborative initiatives across the arts, humanities, and sciences.
- Conduct collection research, including acquisition research and proposals relating to ARI projects.
- Present ongoing research at scholarly conferences or other venues as appropriate in addition to publications in various formats.
- Contribute to digital projects, with special attention to ARI web presence to increase global reach.
- Select, organize, and guide ARI faculty and undergraduate research fellows, visiting artists, and external scholars.
- Initiate, collaborate on, and contribute to ARI-related grant proposals and funded project management.
- Participate in efforts to establish and build donor relations and contribute to or support other fund-raising activities.
- Oversee evaluation and assessment of ARI.
- Prepare annual budget for ARI.

Teaching, Mentorship and Supervision (10%)

- Supervise and mentor ARI graduate fellow.
- Mentor undergraduate and graduate students, including serving on thesis committees, as appropriate.
- Teach occasional undergraduate or graduate courses as appropriate.

Professional Service (10%)

- Contribute to major initiatives across the museum and campus, with regional and state partners, and within the museum profession at large.
- Sustain and expand scholarly and professional collaborations across the University, the state of Kansas, and with national and international colleagues.
- Serve on KU and professional committees.
- Represent the Museum at scholarly, professional, campus, public, and cultivation events.
- Establish and maintain active professional affiliations regionally, nationally, and internationally.

Other Duties as Assigned (5%)

- Participate in all-staff and curatorial meetings, and other committee meetings as appropriate.
- Participate in Spencer Museum- and KU-wide trainings.
- Assist and participate in other activities as they arise and in concert with supervisor.

Required Qualifications:

Assistant Curator Level

1. PhD or terminal degree.
2. Three or more years of relevant arts and/or museum experiences, including demonstrated experience with interdisciplinary research across the arts, humanities, sciences and social sciences.
3. Demonstrated record of professional performance and accomplishment that indicates potential for future success in a leadership role.

tial to advance the goals of the Spencer Museum of Art, the University of Kansas, and the art museum profession.

4. Demonstrated record of research (scholarship and/or creative and innovative work), such as completed dissertation, peer-reviewed publications, projects or performances, and/or contributions to exhibitions and exhibition publications.
5. Demonstrated service to an institution; to the discipline or profession; and/or to the local, state, regional, national, or international communities.
6. Record of working collaboratively and creatively on teams, including a job history demonstrating experience working openly and effectively with partners such as artists, scholars, students and/or the public.

Associate Curator Level: Consideration will be given to assignment of associate curator based on the following:

1. PhD or terminal degree.
2. Eight or more years of relevant arts, collections and/or museum experiences, including demonstrated experience with interdisciplinary research across the arts, humanities, sciences and social sciences.
3. Demonstrated record of effective museum practice as reflected in such factors as command of relevant position responsibilities, the ability to communicate effectively, and other accomplishments indicating commitment to the mission of the SMA, KU, and the profession or area of specialization in a related field.
4. Quality and quantity of research (scholarship and/or creative and innovative work) demonstrating a successfully developing career as reflected in such factors as collaborative interdisciplinary projects, advancement with artistic research, longitudinal research projects with results that drive art and scholarship, and/or critically reflective and creative engagement with museum practices.
5. Demonstrated pattern of service to an institution at one or more levels; to the discipline or profession; and/or to the local, state, regional, national, or international communities.
6. Record of working collaboratively and creatively on teams, including a job history demonstrating experience working openly and effectively with partners such as artists, scholars, students and/or the public.

Senior Curator Level: Consideration will be given to assignment of senior curator based on the following:

1. PhD or terminal degree.
2. Twelve or more years of relevant arts, collections and/or museum experiences, including demonstrated experience with interdisciplinary research across the arts, humanities, sciences and social sciences as well as demonstrated leadership and supervision.
3. Demonstrated record of distinguished professional performance in a successfully developing career, with evidence of sustained productivity, continued effectiveness and growth as a professional as reflected in such factors as a deepened and creative engagement with museum practice and professional skills, a measure of national and/or international recognition, and other accomplishments indicating commitment to the mission of the SMA, KU, and the profession or area of specialization in a related field.
4. Quality and quantity of research (scholarship and/or creative and innovative work) demonstrating a successfully developing career at a senior level as reflected in such factors as a substantial and ongoing pattern of collaborative interdisciplinary projects, advancement with artistic

research, longitudinal research projects with results that drive art and scholarship, and/or critically reflective and creative engagement with museum practices.

5. Demonstrated ongoing pattern of service reflecting substantial contributions to an institution; to the discipline or profession; and/or to the local, state, regional, national, or international communities that reflect strong partner relationships with organizations and significant civic engagement with various communities.
6. Record of working collaboratively and creatively on teams, including a job history demonstrating experience working openly and effectively with partners such as artists, scholars, students and/or the public.

Additional Candidate Instruction:

A complete online application includes:

1. Cover letter addressing how you meet the required and preferred qualifications.
2. Curriculum vitae.
3. Statement of research interests and future directions (approximately 500-1000 words)
4. Sample of written work (no longer than 5,000 words) or other scholarly product.
5. Names, email, and contact information for three professional references (including at least one previous or current supervisor).
6. Completion of the KU Human Resources online application.

Application review begins March 16, 2026 and continues until a pool of qualified candidates has been collected.

Contact Information to Applicants

Celka Straughn, Deputy Director for Public Practice and Curatorial

straughn@ku.edu

(785) 864-6796

Reference:

JOB: Curator for Research, Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas. In: ArtHist.net, Feb 9, 2026
(accessed Feb 10, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/51704>>.