

Hoxton Street Monster Supplies

ESTD 1818

~ Purveyor of Quality Goods for Monsters of Every Kind ~

Volunteer Handbook

2020



MINISTRY OF STORIES

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Contact information

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HSMS Shop Hours:
Thurs-Friday 1pm-5pm
Saturday 11am-5pm

Trading and Administration Manager
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Welcome!

Welcome to Ministry and Hoxton Street Monster Supplies. We can't tell you how much we appreciate you joining us as a volunteer. You're about to take one of the most important roles in our organisation.

Not only will you be helping raise vital funds for Ministry of Stories clubs and workshops, as a shopkeeper you are also the welcoming face to all visitors to MoS - from young people taking part in our drop-ins, to local passers-by, to international tourists seeking fun and unusual activities. You will provide knowledge about our unique line of products for monsters as well as information about MoS.

This manual provides a general overview of volunteering in the shop, and the shop's two very different histories. But we encourage you to ask any questions if you have them!

We hope that you'll get a lot from volunteering with us. Our shopkeepers are lovely, dedicated and helpful people, but most of them are not here because they are selfless. They are also here because they enjoy it!

We hope that you enjoy it too.

What the reviewers say about Hoxton Street Monster Supplies:

I love this place which never ceases to entertain. 5 Supersupergirl Blogger*

Products are adorable and delicious, cause is worthy and warming ... Definitely worth visiting and supporting! 5 Krystal F*

Creative and a great cause. Read the signs - all of them. Read the labels. It is a kick! 5 Teri S*

One of my favourite unusual spots in London. Go buy amazing funny presents whilst helping young people too. 5 Emma D*

What volunteers say:

The Ministry [of Stories] feels like home to me. I love spending my Saturdays in the shop... It's great fun! - Lina S

I've loved every minute of it. I'm amazed how genuinely weird an afternoon in Hoxton Street Monster Supplies can be. Bafflement, hilarity... I've gained some brilliant new skills, met some wonderful new people and had some truly bizarre experiences. - Paul E

The kinds of people who seek out a monster supplies shop don't need much persuasion to jump on the banterous bandwagon. - Helia M

Volunteering in the shop is a great way to meet people - from tourists who've travelled from afar specifically to visit us, to locals who wander in when something catches their eye ...and it's great to chat to people about all the wonderful things MoS does. Obviously volunteering in a shop designed to serve monsters has challenges. On the whole however, most monsters have impeccable manners. - Simon M

The best thing is when children who attended Ministry of Stories workshops come to the shop and tell us how much they enjoyed them. ... I enjoy how much fun even the most mundane tasks in the shop can be. And how nice all our (monster) customers are. - Eva H

[Monster Supplies] is such fun; there are lots of opportunities to be creative - it is a feel good place on every level. - Anon

About Hoxton Street Monster Supplies and Postal Services

(One!) History

The history of Hoxton Street Monster Supplies goes back centuries - two, to be exact.

Hoxton Street Monster Supplies' founder was Igor I, who many have heard of.

Igor landed here in London after particular troubles he encountered in his home state of Bavaria meant he had to quickly vacate mainland Europe. The year was 1817 and the troubles, we don't discuss. The shop is eager to help sustain the fragile peace the global monster community has since worked hard for, so please don't ask about it.

Igor discovered shortly after landing that London lacked a supply store serving only monster needs. As you will imagine, these are quite particular. Seeing an opportunity, and hoping to ingratiate himself to the city's monsters, he decided to open a shop.

In 1818 Hoxton Street Monster Supplies threw open its doors for the first time, selling bespoke and everyday items for the living, dead and undead, and mainly the latter. It has grown famous over the centuries for its range of delectable edibles, including its salts made from human tears, earwax (filtered and unfiltered), its specialist free range human preserves, and its wide range of pharmaceuticals that ensure even under-the-weather monsters can operate at full scare.

Over the centuries many things at Hoxton Street Monster Supplies have stayed the same but there have been notable changes brought on by Igor I's great, great, great granddaughter. Igor V, a bit of a maverick, giving the shop windows their first ever cleaning in 2009, bringing in light and revealing its interior to humans. She also brought in computerisation and electricity, banned human sacrifice as a form of payment (this actually was a mandate from Hackney Council but one she readily embraced) and... started to allow humans customers through the door.

These changes, most notably the new relationship to humans, have not been without controversy. To point, the shop was cursed in 2010 - a likely linked incident - and since then 100% of proceeds from sales of monster supplies have to go to Ministry of Stories, the children's creative writing and mentoring charity behind the shop. Igor V is trying to rectify this situation.

The postal service

2018 marked the shop's 200th anniversary. Upon lobbying from centuries-old human-curious customers, Igor V took the new monster-human relationship she'd cultivated to a new level: she enabled the shop's Post Mortem Postal Service counter to become visible, and usable, to humans for the first time. Now human visitors to the shop can also use the postal service to post letters to isolated or inquisitive monsters seeking contact -- and receive replies via the service. It generally takes an exchange a month to traverse the monster-human worlds.

About Ministry of Stories

Ministry of Stories was founded in 2010 with the aim of inspiring a nation of storytellers. MoS believes in the power of imagination and writing to build young people's confidence and self-respect and enhance their ability to communicate and understand the world.

MoS run one-off onsite schools workshops where children leave as published authors, and regular weekly writing clubs for 8-15 year olds both onsite and in schools that are free for the young people who attend. Our work is largely London-based, and our onsite clubs invite members who live in our catchment area, with occasional exceptions made in cases of special educational need. Our catchment changes, so please ask about it.

Our clubs and workshops are enriched with 1-1 mentoring by trained volunteers made up of local people, other young people, artists, writers and teachers who provide the skills, experience and individual attention we believe makes the difference to young people.

Our work is designed to fire young people's imaginations and to make writing fun. Co-founded by author Nick Hornby, along with Lucy Macnab, Ben Payne and Alistair Hall, Ministry of Stories works with all forms of writing: from screenwriting, poetry and songwriting, to blogging, podcasts, journalism and copywriting. We believe in writing for a purpose, working towards a finished product that another person can read or experience.

Ministry of Stories is located in one of the most deprived boroughs in the country, with big challenges for literacy. Since launching in November 2010 we have registered 1000s of volunteers, and have had over 10,000 children attending clubs and workshops. We'd like to see projects like Ministry of Stories in every community in the UK that needs it and can support it.

Why Hoxton Street Monster Supplies?

The Ministry is inspired by the highly successful model of 826 Valencia, founded nearly 20 years ago in San Francisco by the novelist, Dave Eggers. Eggers' guessed there would be enough writers and those interested in writing in his community willing to volunteer their time to mentor young people with their writing.

However, the space he found for his writing centre at 826 Valencia Street was zoned for commercial purposes... it had to sell something! And so, inspired by the building's wooden ship-like interior, he and a large team of inspired volunteers opened the space as the world's first supply store for pirates. The Pirate Supply Store in San Francisco runs to this day and welcomes visitors.

The idea spread and there are now dozens of other 826-inspired writing centers across the US and the world, large numbers of which also have fantastical shops - even where these weren't mandated by zoning! You can find shops for superheroes (Brooklyn), time travellers (Los Angeles), aliens (Seattle), magical beings (Rotherham), and beyond. No two shops are alike but they all create imaginative worlds with their profits supporting the cost of writing and mentoring programmes. The storefronts too, attract curiosity from passersby many of whom go on to become volunteers or donors.

Hoxton Street Monster Supplies also boasts its 'Post Mortem Postal Service', where people young and old can write letters to monsters and a month later receive a reply from our trained ghostwriters, enabling a creative writing opportunity for anyone who comes to the shop.

Other ways you can help MoS

Mentoring

Ministry of Stories aims to inspire young people to embrace their creativity and learn by writing. But to do this, responsible and inspired people are needed to become writing mentors for our workshops and drop-ins. You don't have to be a writer or a teacher or have worked with kids to become a writing mentor! MoS offers training and support for anyone who thinks they can encourage a young person by asking the right questions to open possibilities in the imagination.

Illustrators

Are you handy with a felt tip pen? Can you think on your feet? The Ministry would love to hear from you. MoS needs illustrators to draw stories to life during workshops; these then become part of the published story that children proudly take home with them.

Fundraising

Ministry of Stories writing labs and programmes are funded by trusts & foundations, individual donors and businesses. If you work for a company that offers charities a donation in exchange for volunteer hours, options for payroll giving, want to host a pop-up shop in your office, or you have a volunteer programme and want to get your colleagues on board, please speak to a member of the Ministry of Stories team. If you would like to fundraise for us - a skydive, a marathon or a book sale - please ask to speak to our fundraising team and we'll support you every step of the way.

Events

Ministry of Stories likes a good shindig and likes to throw a variety of events to make friends and/or make some money. The Ministry can always use volunteers to help, either with coordination and promotion, or by helping on the night as bartenders, door people and clean up crew. Please shout if you'd like to work on this as part of a team.

Shop Sessions

Weekdays

The shop is open Thursdays and Fridays from 13.00 to 17.00. Volunteer shopkeepers sessions start at 12.45 to ready the shop for opening, finish at 17.15 to close the shop.

Saturday

The shop is open Saturdays from 11.00 to 17.00, divided into two volunteering options. The first session starts at 10.45am to prepare the shop, finishing at 2:00; the second slot runs 2pm-5:15pm, allowing 15 minutes to complete closing procedures.

The Role of a Shopkeeper

Hoxton Street Monster Supplies are Purveyors of High Class Goods for Monsters of All Kinds, so please ensure you make all monsters welcome, and explain our products to any curious humans. In addition to familiarising yourself with the HSMS product line, it's helpful to know what MoS offers, as you will be the first line of call about MoS for interested visitors.

Engage customers to be interactive and encourage them to find out what the shop has for sale -- and tell them what work their purchases from the shop supports. You can encourage visitors to sign up for the email newsletter list and to make a donation if they seem keen.

It is hoped that where possible you can keep the belief that this is a shop for monsters until the subject of MoS is brought up. For a few reasons this isn't always possible but it is an aspiration and it's what has earned us a reputation internationally as a brilliantly fun place to visit.

Further in this booklet you will find a table of the daily tasks required to set up, run, and close the shop. The monster shop will at times be quiet. When this happens, there are a number of things you can do for the shop and for MoS. These include: online fulfilment, pricing, dusting, stacking shelves, making Tins of Fear, making notebooks, typing up children's writing, etc.

You are also welcome to bring along your own work, studies, a book to read, knitting, etc, so long as when customers are in the shop, or outside pondering whether to come in, you put these aside to give them your attention.

One Very Important Thing

You're not expected to be an expert on anything MoS or shop related, so if you are ever in doubt, however small the question, please ask first. We are all happy to try and answer -- so don't go it alone.

Your Commitment

Volunteers are the lifeblood of MoS. Volunteers keep HSMS running, and provide energy, ideas and information about how to make the shop vibrant, fun and brilliant.

Volunteers are asked for a 6 session commitment which can be spread over a number of weeks or 6 months, it is entirely up to you. Six sessions represents a minimum to justify costs of training - there are no maximum session numbers however.

The shop depends on volunteers being on time for their sessions so please ring if you're running late.

Swapping sessions

If you need to swap a session due to illness or an emergency, please let MoS know by phone as soon as possible. Also because shop timings are important, please be punctual, ringing as soon as possible if you are running late.

Bring a Fiend!

After you've worked in the shop a session or two and are familiar with its workings, if you'd like to bring along a friend, colleague, roommate or family member to join you for a shop session, just ask! It's a great way to introduce others to what we do.

10% Discount

All MoS / HSMS volunteers are entitled to a 10% discount in the shop. Ask a member of staff to ring your items up for you.

Daily Running of the Shop

BEGINNING OF DAY

<i>Task</i>	<i>Done?</i>
Get mp3 player and speakers from charge and turn on in shop	
Count float with float sheet (should be £90)	
Put on apron	
Turn on shop music	
Disable Maglock and turn sign to open	
Start new daily footfall sales occurrences sheet	

THROUGHOUT THE DAY

<i>Task</i>	<i>Done?</i>
Greet customers, answer questions, keep up the HSMS facade!	
Keep products neat, filling empty spaces where products sell	
Product assembly, bag stamping, typing children's work, etc	
Fill in interesting happenings and/or social media ideas on sheet	

END OF DAY

<i>Task</i>	<i>Done?</i>
Re-enable Maglock and turn sign to Closed	
Restock sold items, tidy shelves	
Turn off cat and radio and put mp3 player and speakers back to charge	
Close the register on Vend and print takings stub	
Count cash and set float to £90, taking cash and sheet to shop manager	
Re-enable Maglock and turn sign to Closed	

Policies & Emergency Information

Breaks

If at any point you need a break and are doing your session solo please give a shout. MoS staff are always happy for a stint in the shop, or indeed to brew you a cuppa for you if you'd prefer! Please make sure the shop is always attended, even if it's just to run and grab a glass of water. If you need to grab a staff member's attention and the back space is filled with excited, boisterous children, you can press the button below the counter for our attention.

Mobile Phones

Please be mindful of mobile phone use. The shop window is very open and you are very visible. If it's important to take a call and you are alone, you can ask someone else to look after the shop while you take it.

In case of emergency

If there's an emergency at MoS, the most important thing is your safety and the safety of young people. There are exits at the front of the shop and the back. Please use the exit that's closest and safest to you. In case of a fire, please leave all belongings behind and meet at Olive across the road.

Comfort

If for any reason you feel uncomfortable about a customer in the shop, or far more likely if you are asked a question you can't answer, please press the button under the counter, which can also be used to call a member of staff in any situation you require support. In the very unlikely incident of a robbery (it has never happened) hand over the money and make sure you put your safety first.

Email

Once you join the team, you'll get emails about opportunities available to you as a volunteer. Please sign up via the website calendar for anything you would like to participate in. NB, if you are interested in mentoring or volunteering as an illustrator in our workshops, you will need to come along to one of our day-long trainings and complete a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) form; we will cover the costs for.



MINISTRY OF STORIES

Our Commitment to you

When you volunteer with us, we aim to develop your skills and experiences. We'll let you know about extra training sessions, social meet ups, events, and other opportunities within MoS that we encourage you to take part in. We aim to support you in whatever way we can to make your time with us worthwhile for you, while being of immense value to the charity.

Your Commitment to Ministry of Stories/Hoxton Street Monster Supplies

I agree to the stated volunteering terms made by MoS and Hoxton Street Monster Supplies.

Signed: Date: