

# Research Report

2018–19





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# Foreword

Liz Jolly, Chief Librarian



Welcome to our third annual Research Report, covering the academic year October 2018 to September 2019. Research is central to the work of the British Library, permeating what we do as an organisation and shaping what we are able to offer to all our users, collaborators and audiences.

Reflecting on last year, I would normally highlight how we provide access to our collections and resources to researchers on site and online. As I write this during a global pandemic, when throughout lockdown researchers and public have been unable to use our physical spaces, it is particularly timely to signal how our own research also underpins growth in the remote discovery, access and use of our digital collections.

You will see digital activity in abundance in this report, with research projects supporting work across the Library to build our digital collections, enabling researchers to access this content from anywhere in the world, and to apply new research methods in ever increasing scale and interdisciplinary scope. This way of working is brought into sharp focus by our partnership with the Alan Turing Institute and the UKRI-funded *Living with Machines* project, as featured within. We were also delighted to contribute in 2019 to UKRI's Research Infrastructure Roadmap to help inform future planning for UK research and innovation.

Cover: Wax cylinder recordings in the British Library Sound Archive. Image copyright the British Library Board. Wax phonograph cylinders were an early commercial medium for recording sound. The recording was engraved into the surface of the wax cylinder, which could be played on a phonograph – an early record player. The *True Echoes* project, featured in this report, is reconnecting communities in the Pacific region with digitised recordings that were created on wax cylinders and other mediums.

As an Independent Research Organisation, the Library plays an important role in the wider research landscape. We collaborate with colleagues in cultural organisations and academia across the UK and globally to develop unique research projects in partnership. Indeed, this edition of the Research Report has a particular focus on international research.

We have made a commitment to our staff and users that we will become an actively anti-racist organisation, and will take all the necessary steps required to make this promise a reality. This includes ensuring that our spaces, events, exhibitions and policies are genuinely inclusive and representative, and addressing the histories of some of our collections in the context of the colonial past. In next year's report, we will review our progress in implementing an Anti-Racism action plan, and how this informs our research activity.

## We collaborate with colleagues in cultural organisations and academia across the UK and globally to develop unique research projects in partnership

This report celebrates the broad range of research that has happened at the Library over the last academic year. You will hear the voices of our staff, PhD students and Fellows, providing their own insights into research projects large and small, and explaining how research informs practice.

In such challenging times, I hope that this report provides an engaging and informative account of the wide range of research activity at the British Library, and signals our intentions to continue to play a key role in future national and international partnerships that make our intellectual heritage available to everyone, wherever they may be.

# Research projects overview

Total number of  
live projects

**63**



**12**  
as Lead Research Organisation (LRO)

**6**  
as Co-Investigator (Co-I)

**45**  
as Project Partner (PP)

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## MAIN FUNDERS

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**20**  
projects funded by the Arts  
and Humanities Research  
Council (AHRC)

**10**  
by various European Union  
(EU) funding streams

**5**  
by the Leverhulme Trust

**3**  
by the Department for  
Business, Energy and  
Industrial Strategy (BEIS)

**2**  
by the Andrew W. Mellon  
Foundation

## MAIN FUNDERS

The remainder were funded by a wide range of UK and international funders, including the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the British Academy, the Paul Mellon Centre and the Arcadia Charitable Trust.

Total value of these grants

c. **£77.4  
million**

Value of the 12 grants led by the British Library

c. **£3.9  
million**

## Locations of partners on live projects in 2018–19

<b>London</b>	Birkbeck, University of London; British Museum (2); University College London (5); Goldsmiths, University of London; King's College London (2); Queen Mary University of London (2); University of Roehampton, London; SOAS University of London (2); University of Westminster
<b>Rest of UK</b>	Bath Spa University; University of Birmingham; Coventry University; University of Exeter; University of Glasgow; University of Kent (3); Lancaster University; University of Leeds; University of Leicester (2); University of Lincoln; University of Manchester; University of Nottingham; University of Oxford (2); Queen's University Belfast; University of Surrey; University of Sussex; University of Southampton; UKRI; University of Warwick
<b>Germany</b>	Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich; Leibniz Universität Hannover, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz
<b>France</b>	Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS), Paris; L'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO), Paris
<b>Belgium</b>	Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België (KBR), Brussels
<b>Italy</b>	Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale"
<b>Spain</b>	Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona
<b>Europe</b>	Europeana
<b>Australia</b>	University of New South Wales, Sydney
<b>USA</b>	University of Illinois, Chicago

# Supporting early career research

Working closely with universities across the UK, we have continued to offer a wide range of collaborative PhD studentships, with 31 projects underway during 2018–19.

Our role within the Arts and Humanities Research Council's (AHRC) Collaborative Doctoral Partnership scheme and our collaboration with Doctoral Training Partnerships remained at the heart of our commitment to developing opportunities for original postgraduate research inspired by the breadth of the Library's collections. In addition, our staff supported several affiliate PhD projects with their expertise.

Our annual Doctoral Placement Scheme enabled 17 PhD students to undertake 3-month projects and develop their portfolio of skills under the mentorship of Library staff. We also continued to offer our Doctoral Open Days to introduce UK and international doctoral researchers to the Library's resources and collections.

## CASE STUDY



*During my placement I researched three areas of the British Library's international engagement over the past ten years: object loans, Reader nationalities and website visits. Learning new skills in data visualisation, I analysed and presented the Library's data in relation to that of other institutions. My research provided insights about the Library's global reach, which can be used to inform future decision making."*

**Lewis Ryder** British Library PhD Placement Student  
(University of Manchester)



Beyond our doctoral programmes, we renewed our commitment to supporting topical research projects and career pathways for postdoctoral researchers, such as the British Sociological Association's Postdoctoral Fellowship and AHRC Innovation Fellowships.

## Current Collaborative Doctoral Students

# 31



- 3 University of Leicester
- 3 University of Liverpool
- 3 Lancaster University
- 2 Queen Mary University of London
- 2 University of Kent
- 2 SOAS University of London
- 2 University College London
- 2 Royal Holloway, University of London
- 1 student each from City University London, King's College London, University of Sussex, University of Exeter, Bath Spa University, University of Manchester, University of Sheffield, University of Stirling, University of Leeds, University of Bristol, Nottingham Trent University, University of Glasgow

## Interview

Dr Emma Abotsi, British Sociological Association  
Postdoctoral Fellow for Sociology at the British Library



Emma was appointed as the new BSA Fellow in January 2019. During her BSA Fellowship, she used the Library's collections to explore education and community activism in Asian, African and Caribbean communities in Britain.

### What attracted you to this specific fellowship?

I have experience working as an archivist at the Black Cultural Archives and an interest in education in immigrant and minority communities in the UK. I was excited about the opportunity this fellowship provided to explore the Library's collections and conduct research that brings together my different interests.

### Thinking about your work with archival material at the Library, what was the main challenge you encountered, and what was your highlight?

My main challenge was learning to navigate the many different collections! But I soon found my

way around by attending the Library's Doctoral Open Days and speaking to reference specialists and curators. It's hard to pick one highlight, but finding records of protests by Asian communities in Southall during the 1970s, against the dispersal policy seeking to limit the number of Asian children at local schools by bussing them to schools in other areas, was a valuable example of the impact of racism and anti-immigrant policies on young people's educational experiences.

### Could you tell us about how the Library's collections informed your research activities?

The Library's collections include the works of African, Caribbean and Asian activists and community-led programmes, and I was able to show the links between the lived experience of Black and Asian communities today and historical campaigns in the 1970s and 1980s. For example, the campaigns of the Haringey Black Pressure Group on Education in the 1980s against the high number of Black children being excluded from schools and placed in 'Sin-bins' (Pupil Referral Units) mirror more recent examples of campaigns against the disproportionate number of Black children on fixed-term exclusion from schools. My fellowship enabled me to use my research to highlight the ongoing effects of racism and anti-immigrant policies through public talks and blogs, for example my [blog](#) about the 1983 anti-immigration laws.

### In your experience, what is the value of this type of fellowship for an early-career researcher?

This fellowship provided a unique opportunity to use British Library collections and develop new skills that are beneficial both inside and outside academia. I learnt how to conduct archival research and participated in advisory meetings for upcoming exhibitions and event planning which gave me an insight into what curators do. Another key feature of this fellowship was expanding my knowledge of the sociology of race and ethnicity. I was able to set up a reading group which allowed me to engage with texts from a wide range of disciplines and learn from colleagues with different academic and professional backgrounds.

## CASE STUDY



*My project focuses on the literary archive of Ruth Praver Jhabvala. This year, I worked with Library colleagues to co-organise and participate in an event celebrating Jhabvala's work, with contributors including James Ivory, and Anita Desai. I also responded to press enquiries, ran a follow-up 'Show and Tell' session involving students from SOAS, and wrote a journal article about my research. These activities informed and enriched my thesis questions and my work cataloguing the archive."*

**Pauline McGonagle** AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Student (British Library and University of Exeter)



## CASE STUDY



*My placement explored Born-again archives: The challenges, benefits, and opportunities of digitisation projects through case studies focussing on the Catholic newspaper The Tablet and the Digital Delius project. The project enabled me to further my research skills through collecting and analysing background history, interviews, and statistical data. My final report critiqued and produced suggestions for best practice to develop collaborative, impactful and sustainable digitisation projects, with the aim of improving the Library's digitisation services and encouraging future digitisation endeavours."*

**Hannah Rodger** British Library PhD Placement Student (University of York)



## Doctoral Open Days: a British Library tradition

First established in 2007, our annual series of continually evolving Doctoral Open Days helps those embarking on doctoral research projects become familiar with what the Library has to offer.

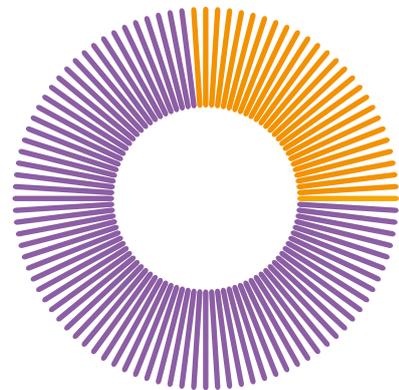
Between December 2018 and March 2019, a programme of events at our sites in St Pancras, London and Boston Spa, West Yorkshire offered doctoral researchers thematic overviews, introductions to specific subject areas and guidance on how to search the Library's catalogues. The days also provided a unique opportunity to meet our curators, see collection items up close, hear about digital research and ask current PhD students about their experience.

Number of Doctoral Open Days 2018–9

9

Number of attendees

448



Proportion of delegates  
from outside London:

76%



# Project in focus: Living with Machines

Led by Dr Ruth Ahnert (QMUL), with co-investigators including Dr Mia Ridge and Maja Maricevic (British Library), and funded by the UKRI Strategic Priority Fund



*Living with Machines* is a collaborative project between the Alan Turing Institute, academics at UK universities and the British Library. Together, they are using data science and digital history methods to analyse millions of historical documents and create a richer understanding of the impact of mechanisation in the 19th century.

The project aims to develop new computational techniques for working with historical research questions and sources, to create re-usable tools, code and datasets, and to advance public awareness of data science methods and digital research in the humanities.

Benefits for the cultural heritage sector include

- New models for research collaboration and partnership
- Developing workflows for managing large-scale digitisation
- Data processing for analysis and ingesting enriched collection holdings
- Applying new and emerging technologies to collections at scale.

*"The project is a bold proposal for a new research paradigm defined by radical collaboration that seeks to close the gap between computational sciences and the arts and humanities. We want to create both a data-driven approach to our cultural past, and a human-focused approach to data science."*

**Dr Ruth Ahnert** Principal Investigator

*"The project has already helped the Library explore the potential and challenges of data science methods, including copyright, the use of cloud-based services at scale, and meshing digitisation and analytical timeframes."*

**Dr Mia Ridge** Co-Investigator and the British Library's Digital Curator for Western Heritage Collections

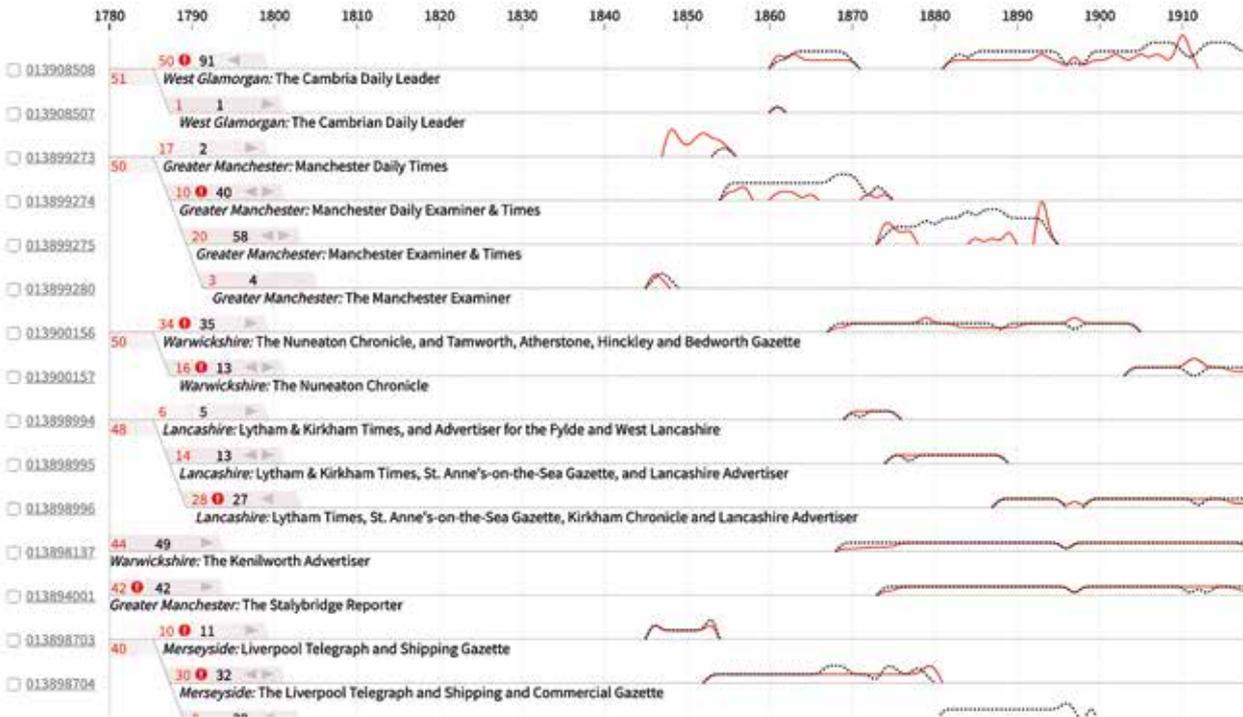
*"The project is advancing our capability to undertake computational analysis using very large and heterogeneous digitised sources, and our understanding of types of infrastructure that will enable us to deploy more data-driven research in the future."*

**Maja Maricevic** Co-Investigator and the British Library's Head of Higher Education and Science

“One of the challenges faced by the *Living with Machines* project is making sense of collection metadata at scale. To support digitisation requests, we developed a new way of overviewing the Library’s newspaper holdings. The team created a custom tool, *Press Picker*, which shows each newspaper title (e.g. *The Times* or *The Blackpool Herald*) as a small line graph. The formats newspapers are stored in (hardbound volumes or microfilm reels) have different implications for digitisation. In the tool, the height of coloured lines

shows the numbers of these different formats in the Library for each title over time. To complicate matters, newspaper titles sometimes change their name through time. *The Athletic Reporter*, for example, in 1886 became *The Reporter*. We made this clear by bringing together connected titles with a branching design on the left. *Press Picker* has helped us make sense of this collection data and, when a public version is released, we hope it will do the same for others too.”

Dr Olivia Vane Research Software Engineer, *Living with Machines*



Screenshot taken from the Press Picker tool. Courtesy Olivia Vane.

One aim of *Living with Machines* is to use Natural Language Processing (NLP) methods – such as Named Entity Recognition or text classification – to analyse digitised collections at scale to ask new questions about the impact of industrial change during the 19th century. A major challenge for the project is working with material produced using Optical Character Recognition (OCR). OCR is not a perfect process and it often mistranscribes characters or words, particularly when used for historical materials. An early

question for the project was what impact these errors would have on the results of NLP methods. We have found that methods like Named Entity Recognition have decreasing accuracy as the quality of the OCR decreases. The impact of OCR quality has implications beyond our project since it can impact full-text search and other information retrieval, making some digitised collections more challenging to ‘find’ and interrogate.

Dr Daniel van Strein Digital Curator, *Living with Machines*

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@11-S TREE 11,
HALL, CIGAR
IMPORTER,
celebrated Comic Duetists. (CORl'ff.lt OF PARKER-STREET.)
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An example of text produced through OCR for a historic newspaper article showing misrecognised characters in names and addresses. This is an example of text that a method such as Named Entity Recognition may struggle to parse correctly. Source: [Heritage Made Digital Newspaper, Northern Times, 1861](#). Courtesy Daniel van Strein.

# New projects

This year saw the start of 22 new research projects on which the British Library leads, co-investigates, or is a project partner. We continue to support research across a broad range of topics related to the Library's collections, from the writings of the Brontës, across audio collections from the Gulf, through to Chinese Botanical drawings. Our projects are funded by a range of national and international funders, and we have collaborated with colleagues from across the UK as well as Europe, the USA and Australia.

## An Oral History of Farming, land management and conservation in post-war Britain



Photo courtesy of interviewee Robert Hart.

Led by National Life Stories at the Library and funded by Arcadia, this three-year project is recording 50 in-depth biographical interviews with farmers, landowners, scientists and policy makers who have been central to transformations in agriculture and the management of the countryside in Britain since 1945. Recordings cover the application of scientific knowledge in fields as diverse as tractor design and nature conservation, the overlooked work of female farmers, impacts of national and EU policy, and ongoing debates over right and wrong ways to use land, produce food and protect the environment. Interviews will be available through the *Listening and Viewing Service* in our Reading Rooms and via the forthcoming British Library Sounds website. They will also be explored in project talks and publications.

## Rutherford Fund: Vijayanagara Research Project



Sagera Kazmi consulting the Vijayanagara Research Project original drawings with the archaeologists Dr John Fritz (left) and Dr George Michell (right) who donated 10,000 plus drawings, photographs and slides relating to the excavation of the World Heritage Site. Photograph by Malini Roy.

The UK Government's Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) continued to support a programme of fellowships and staff exchanges through a Rutherford Grant. The 2018/19 project was a partnership between our Visual Arts section and the Center for Art & Archaeology (CA&A, part of the American Institute of Indian Studies, New Delhi) to exchange knowledge of archival practices and complementary collections relating to the Hampi Vijayanagara UNESCO World Heritage Site. Sagera Kazmi (Rutherford Fellow and CA&A Archivist) spent six months archiving the *Vijayanagara Research Project* and creating more than 6,000 records that will be made publicly available in the near future.

## The GDD Network: towards a global dataset of digitised texts

From February 2019, Dr Paul Gooding (University of Glasgow) led a one-year AHRC-funded *network* to investigate the feasibility of a single global dataset of digitised texts. The British Library worked with HathiTrust Digital Library, the National Library of Wales, the National Library of Scotland and Research Libraries UK (RLUK) to organise a series of expert workshops to identify possible use cases for the dataset, and to develop automated metadata matching techniques to support collections overlap analysis. Project outputs included a report making the case for a global resource, and an openly licensed prototype dataset comprising aggregated holdings metadata from network participants.

**22 new**  
new projects  
began this year



**3**  
were led by the British Library (LRO)

**1**  
was co-investigated by  
the British Library (Co-I)

**16**  
on which the British Library  
was a project partner (PP)

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**MAIN FUNDERS**

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- 3** European Union (Horizon 2020)
- 3** British Academy
- 3** AHRC

Their overall combined value  
of these grants is

c. **£21.7 million**

**CASE STUDY**



*I am so grateful to the Institute of Coding, Birkbeck, University of London, and especially my colleagues, for making the Computing for Cultural Heritage PGCert trial a reality, and a success! It's no easy feat to return to university and learn a programming language from scratch. Seeing what this dedicated and hard-working cohort have been able to achieve through the course of the trial, and the innovative tools they've produced to benefit the Library, has been a real inspiration. I can't wait to see what comes next for them and their new software skills."*



**Nora McGregor** Digital Curator, Digital Research Team; project partner on trial PGCert Computing for Cultural Heritage

The British Library and partners Birkbeck University and The National Archives were awarded funding by the Institute of Coding (IoC) to co-develop a one-year part-time postgraduate Certificate (PGCert), *Computing for Cultural Heritage*, as part of a University skills drive.

**CASE STUDY**



*Mediating Militarism: Chronicling 100 Years of Military Victimhood from Print to Digital, 1918–2018 is an ESRC-funded CASE studentship in collaboration with the University of Liverpool and the British Library. My project aims to assess militarism and its role in the commemoration of the British war dead since the end of the First World War, utilising unique access to print and digital materials held in the Library's collections, and particularly the UK Web Archive."*



**Liam Markey** ESRC Collaborative Doctoral Student (British Library and University of Liverpool)

# Partnerships and engagement

Our strategic partnerships are a valuable asset to the Library's research portfolio. The curatorial insight and access to the Library's collections is supported by the academic and professional expertise of our partners. The impact described in this report was only possible through these partnerships; it could not have been achieved alone. We are always keen to explore and develop ambitious new relationships to conduct exciting research. Some of our current strategic partnerships are highlighted here.

## UKRI

We continue to engage with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), and were delighted to be able to contribute to the *UKRI Infrastructure Roadmap Progress Report*, published in March 2019.

The movement of talented people plays an essential role in international research collaborations, and this year we secured Tier 5 Sponsorship status from UKRI to enable easier access to research visas for collaborations that we host.

UKRI launched its Future Leaders Fellowships scheme in 2018 with a £900 million fund to help establish the careers of world-class research and innovation leaders across the UK. The Library's Head of Research Development, Dr Allan Sudlow, participated in two panels for the selection and interview of applicants seeking to secure a career-defining £1.2 million fellowship to be held at a UK University.

We also worked with other Independent Research Organisations (IROs) to develop of the successful UKRI Strategic Priorities Fund Round 2 bid (December 2018), *Towards a National Collection*, which will feature in next year's report.

## British Academy

The British Academy is the UK's national body for the humanities and social sciences, and two staff members continue the strong relationship we have with them. Dr Annabel Teh Gallop, Lead Curator, Southeast Asia, was elected a Fellow of the British Academy this year, and Dr Allan Sudlow has been participating in the Academy's Flagship Skills Project to quantify demand for arts, humanities and social science skills, which will culminate in a report in early 2020.

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

This year, the Library established BAME, Gender Equality, LGBTQ+ and Disability staff networks. These groups support and challenge the Library to be a place of greater equality, inclusion and diversity in how it is perceived and experienced by staff, researchers and the public, and through the many ways in which its collections are represented, discovered, accessed and interpreted.

Gender equality is a focus for the ongoing Leverhulme-funded *Business of Women's Words* project, featured in last year's Research Report. A collaboration between the University of Sussex, the University of Cambridge and the British Library, the project's research informs the exhibition *Unfinished Business: The Fight for Women's Rights*, which opened in October 2020.

*LGBTQ Histories* was launched in February 2018 and continues to grow. This online resource is underpinned by research by Library staff and guest contributors.

The Research Development team supported two events this academic year that spoke to racial inequalities. Since 2011, in partnership with the British Sociological Association, the *Annual Equality Lecture* has been an annual fixture in our public programme examining inequalities in contemporary society. This year's lecture by Professor Kalwant Bhopal shone a light on exclusion and white privilege in UK universities. We also partnered with the *Leading Routes* initiative to host its *Black in Academia* campaign and further the conversation about the representation and experiences of Black students and academic staff in higher education.

## AHRC

In April 2019 we were delighted to learn of our successful application to the third round of the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Collaborative Doctoral Partnership (CDP) scheme.

Over the next three years, we will host nine AHRC CDP studentships as we seek to support the next generation of research talent. The CDP scheme supports the Library to co-supervise doctoral research in partnership with universities across the country which feeds into and enhances knowledge



Professor Kalwant Bhopal delivering the 2018 BSA Annual Equality Lecture. Photo by Tony Trueman.

of the Library's collections, our exhibitions and other engagement activities such as blogs and public talks.

This year we also hosted two Innovation Placements in collaboration with AHRC Doctoral Training Partnerships. This scheme provides opportunities for researchers who have recently completed their PhDs to work with industry partners for six months. Dr Sara Hale undertook a placement in the *Heritage Made Digital* programme at the Library, an initiative to make our unique, rare or fragile heritage collections freely available online. Dr Lynda Clark worked with staff in Contemporary British collections and Digital Scholarship on a project about web based interactive fiction. Their projects were funded by the North West Consortium and the Midlands4Cities Doctoral Training Partnerships, respectively.

### Chevening Fellowships

We continued our partnership with Chevening, the UK Government's international awards scheme. Chevening Fellows undertake 12-month research and professional development projects at the Library. The scheme is a unique opportunity to foster international collaboration and improve global access to the Library's collections.

Akmal Bazarbaev's Chevening Fellowship focused on making the Library's early 20th-century Turkish and Turkic-language periodicals more accessible:

*"The periodicals are published in Turkish and Turkic languages in Arabic and Latin scripts, and the authors used Arabic, Persian and Russian words widely together with Turkic ones. This linguistic diversity is challenging for researchers. My project added details to the online catalogue that will help discovery by researchers, including romanized and original script titles and other bibliographic data."*

During her Chevening Fellowship, Sanja Stepanovic-Todorovic undertook bibliographic and provenance research on Balkan academic publications from 1850–1950:

*"The Balkan academic publications covered by this project are a major scholarly resource for research into the history, language, science and culture of the Balkan nations. For this reason improving their visibility and accessibility is of great importance both for the British Library and for civil society and scholarship in the Balkans itself."*

# Project in focus: True Echoes

## Reconnecting Cultures with Audio from the Beginning of Recorded Sound

Funded by the Leverhulme Trust and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), and led by Isobel Clouter, Curator for World and Traditional Music at the Library.

Launched in January 2019, the *True Echoes* project seeks to reconnect digital collections of audio-visual cultural heritage material with communities in the Pacific region. It does so in partnership with the communities whose cultures the recordings represent, to enable new understandings informed by local knowledge and cultural memory. Isobel Clouter leads the Library's project team, alongside Research Fellows Rebekah Hayes and Dr Vicky Barnecutt, the project research associates, to support access to digitised copies of wax cylinder ethnographic recordings made by British anthropologists in the late-19th and early-20th centuries.



Charles Myers recording the sacred songs of the Malo ceremony, with Ulai singing into the phonograph and Gusu playing the drum Wasikor. Mer, Torres Strait, Australia. July 1898. [N.23209.ACH2] Image courtesy of the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.



Close-up of girls singing into the phonograph. Hula, New Guinea. June 1898. [N.34988.ACH2] Image courtesy of the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology]

### Project partners

- PARADISEC (Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures – Australia)
- Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies (PNG)
- Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta (Vanuatu)
- Solomon Islands Archives and Museum (Solomon Islands)
- Tjibaou Cultural Centre and Kanak Language Academy (New Caledonia)
- British Museum (UK)
- Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (UK).

### Project outputs

- Academic dissemination
- Films, new sound recordings from Oceanic cultures
- New catalogues and enhanced catalogue metadata
- Radio programmes for broadcast on Oceanic radio networks
- An interactive digital Soundmap of recordings
- A project website
- Professional development fellowships for international researchers at the British Library.

### CASE STUDY



*My main focus is to work with our Oceanic partners to establish reciprocal methods for sharing knowledge and metadata related to both the Library's Oceanic wax cylinder collections and new recordings that will be produced during participatory research. I am also working with our partner PARADISEC to develop a portable library catalogue using a Raspberry Pi. This will increase accessibility to and visibility of the sound recordings within Oceanic communities."*

**Rebekah Hayes** Research Fellow, *True Echoes*



### CASE STUDY



*My role is to research the history of the wax cylinder collections within the True Echoes project, from their creation to the present day. I gathered information from the cylinders themselves and the related archives within the British Library, and then researched each collection and recordist. I also started to map connections between the cylinders and related collections of field notes, photographs and objects in the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology and the British Museum."*

**Dr Vicky Barneclutt** Research Fellow, *True Echoes*





Research at the Library often goes hand-in-hand with the practicalities of our day-to-day operations. Core areas of work, such as digitisation, curatorial activities including acquisitions and exhibitions, and the development of digital infrastructure are all underpinned by our research, and support future scholarship by our staff and others. We also support practice-based projects through our postgraduate programmes.

## 3D digitisation of our historic globe collection

Historic globes form a small but unique subset of the Library's map collection. Ranging in date from 1600 to 1900 and in size from an inch to a metre in diameter, the globes provide crucial insights into the history of science and society. However, because of their format, age, craftsmanship and materials, these objects pose particular challenges for handling and interpretation.

Utilising the Library's multi-camera 3D imaging system (pictured), the complete surface areas of 30 globes were photographed using focus stacking. Working alongside the digitisation company Cyreal, Library technicians have constructed accurate 3D digital models. The models help make previously illegible surface features readable, some with the assistance of multi-spectral imaging.

These 3D digital models are being made available via the [British Library website](#), where online audiences will be able to access and interact with them. The project not only makes the globes accessible to a wider audience online, but also helps to preserve these fragile objects for future generations.

## The Eccles Centre for American Studies

*The Eccles Centre* is a springboard for developing ideas and advancing research. The Centre's goal is to connect users with the British Library's North American collections by helping writers, researchers, poets, artists and others uncover new inspirations and develop thought-provoking work. It boldly champions their successes in doing so.

The Centre hosts events, funds research, creates exhibitions and provides training, and nurtures a growing community of talented writers, thinkers and creatives through a range of awards. Highlights include the Centre's growing Visiting Fellowship programme and Summer Scholars, a series of free lunchtime talks given by Eccles fellows.

## CASE STUDY



*During my [Innovation Placement](#), I collected British web-based interactive fiction, working with experts from the Contemporary British, Digital Scholarship and UK Web Archive departments. This project resulted in both critical and creative outputs for my research, including an award-winning interactive work, *The Memory Archivist*. It also allowed me to develop new skills in web archiving which will help me to preserve my own creative practice and advise others aiming to do the same."*

**Dr Lynda Clark** AHRC Innovation Fellow for Interactive Fiction, *Emerging Formats: Discovering and Collecting Contemporary British Interactive Fiction*



## Open Access Repository

We are working to make our intellectual heritage available to everyone.

This year, our Research Services team have piloted a *shared open access repository service* that will provide an easy route for Library staff to share their publications, reports, papers, data and visual content created as a result of their research.

Many of our outputs are not formally published items but still contain valuable research findings, such as gallery texts and labels from our public exhibitions, and large datasets such as collection metadata or digitised indexes. The Repository also contains all issues of our journal, the Electronic British Library Journal (EBLJ).

The project has been developed with partner Independent Research Organisations (IROs) the British Museum, Tate, National Museums Scotland and Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA).

Our new Research Repository launched in November 2019 and will be featured in detail in next year's Research Report.

## Exhibitions

Exhibitions are an opportunity to share research about and new interpretations of the collections with visitors. Our staff, collaborative PhD students, and external experts contribute research that informs the displays and accompanying publications and public programmes. Highlights of the exhibition programme this year included:

- *Windrush: Songs in a Strange Land* (June–October 2018) marked 70 years since the Empire Windrush carried hundreds of migrants to London. Incorporating manuscript and sound archives, this exhibition showcased voices of Caribbean migrants in the Library's collection. The exhibition and the related learning resource *Windrush Stories*, were developed by the Library with contributions from academics, creatives and public figures.

- *Writing: Making your Mark* (April–August 2019) explored 5,000 years of writing around the world. Research by curators from across the Library fed into the exhibition, and led to the publication of an edited book and the *History of Writing* pages on the Library's website, which include a number of essays, interviews and videos by curators.
- *Leonardo da Vinci: A Mind in Motion* (June–September 2019) brought together highlights from three of the Renaissance polymath's notebooks. The exhibition marked the 500th anniversary of Leonardo's death. It was accompanied by a catalogue written by leading Leonardo experts from the UK and Italy.

## CASE STUDY



*For my three-month placement, I was tasked with researching and analysing the impact of major heritage acquisitions at the British Library. The goal was to help provide strategic guidance for future acquisitions, ensuring that new items reach their maximum impact in terms of research and public engagement. The experience was invaluable, giving me an insight into the inner workings of the Library, whilst teaching me how to plan, devise and implement a large-scale research project."*

**Lucas Giles**, British Library PhD Placement Student (University of Cambridge)



## Heritage Acquisitions Group

Heritage acquisitions are of a unique or highly distinctive status and are used as primary sources for research. They are distinct from secondary reference material which is acquired to support research. We acquire heritage material on a regular basis through all forms of purchase and donation, including bequests and tax settlements, and through long-term loans. All heritage acquisitions require careful provenance research, due diligence, expert selection and prioritisation as well as a rigorous assessment of value and lifecycle costs, which can include conservation, preservation, cataloguing, and digitisation.

Curators acquiring heritage material on behalf of the Library are experts in their fields and assess every potential acquisition on its own merit as well as in the context of the Library's existing collections. All selection is guided by our Heritage Acquisitions Policy on which departmental collection development guidelines are based. Heritage acquisitions are added to the national collection with current and future research trends in mind. This requires curators to keep up-to-date with current developments in the wider research community and to anticipate what might be of interest to researchers in years and decades to come.

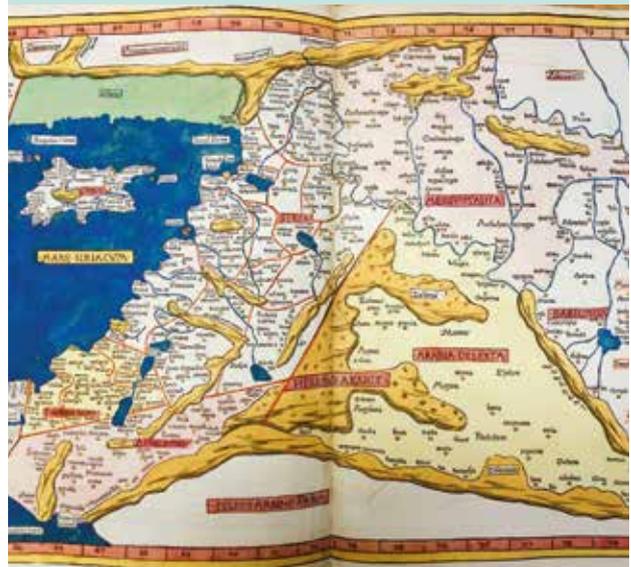
An image from the Percy Hours (Add MS89379), acquired in 2019, can be seen on page 24.

## CASE STUDY



*My Coleridge Fellowship focused on the changes of geographical representation on the early printed maps of the Levant produced from the beginning of printing to the mid-19th century. The Fellowship provided the time for a thorough investigation and allowed me to evaluate the accuracy of selected maps paying particular attention to the hydrographic network and topography of the region. My study provided analysis of the Levant's cartographic transformation and highlighted the influence of individual mapmaking centres."*

**Magdalena Peszko** Curator of Map Collections and Coleridge Fellow 2019



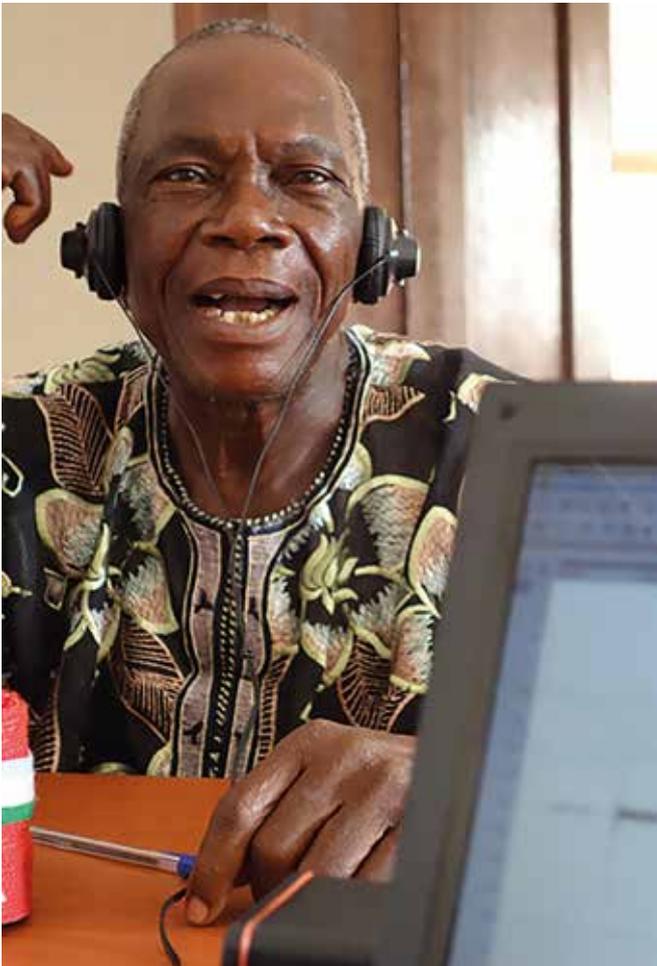
Map of the Levant from the Ulm edition of Ptolemy's Geography, published in 1482 (Shelfmark ORB.40284).

The Coleridge Fellowship supports three-month research breaks for British Library staff to undertake personal research about Library collections. It was established in 2017 through the generosity of Professor Heather Jackson and her late husband Professor J R de J Jackson.

# International engagement

We engage with institutions, organisations and research communities across the world as an essential strategy to build up a sustained dialogue across sectors and enable exchanges of ideas, resources and expertise. Opening up the Library's broad and varied collections to researchers and users from all over the world contributes to our shared global knowledge and enriches our understanding and interpretation of these collections. We continue to grow our portfolio of international fellowships and research projects across all areas of our collections and activities.

## Museum Affordances



Chief Emmanuel Jekpe listening to N W Thomas wax cylinder, Nigeria, 2018. Photo: Paul Basu.

*[Re:]Entanglements* is the website of the *Museum Affordances* project led by Professor Paul Basu at SOAS University of London. Dr Janet Topp Fargion, the British Library's Lead Curator, World and Traditional Music is on the advisory board of the project. This three-year AHRC-funded project draws on a large archive of wax cylinder

recordings, made by colonial anthropologist Northcote Whitridge Thomas between 1909 and 1915 in Nigeria and Sierra Leone, now held at the British Library. Thomas also took thousands of photographs and assembled large artefact collections, now held in other institutions in the UK. The project has been engaging local communities in West Africa with the materials. The Library cannot do this type of research on its own – only through collaboration can we learn more about them and their significance.

## Beyond the Spectacle

The Eccles Centre for American Studies and the British Library have collaborated with the University of East Anglia and the University of Kent on the project *Beyond the Spectacle*. Led by Professor David Stirrup (University of Kent), *Beyond the Spectacle* is an AHRC-funded project that brings together an international team of researchers and Native North American people to amplify the stories of Indigenous travellers to Britain in the historical record and in the current moment.

## Nahrein Network



Mohammed Jasim Aalhajiahmed presenting to staff at the British Library. Photograph by Eleanor Cooper.

The Nahrein Network is an AHRC Global Challenges Research Fund project that aims to enhance the capacity of Iraqi, Iranian, Lebanese and Turkish scholars to engage in the sustainable development of cultural heritage. Based at University College London, the University of Kurdistan Hewlêr, and the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, the network runs a visiting scholarship scheme for which the British Library acts as a host institution. In July 2019, we hosted *Mohammed Jasim Aalhajiahmed*, former Director of Mosul University Library for a month-long visit. The

library in Mosul was destroyed during the ISIS/ Daesh occupation of the city in 2014–17. Reflecting on his time at the British Library, Mohammed Jasim says:

*"I shadowed as many people as possible and got an idea of everybody's work, which in turn helps us rebuild our library collection as we are starting from scratch. I will share the experience with the [Mosul University] library staff and work on what I have achieved during my placement, especially with regard to partnership opportunities, access to e-materials, training opportunities for library staff and following up the support for the library from the people I met."*

### Digitisation Skills Exchange



Attendees of the workshop sitting outside one of the lecture halls on the NCBS campus, courtesy Tom Derrick.

In August 2019, the Library's *Two Centuries of Indian Print* (2CIP) project team delivered a digital skills workshop on *Archival Standards and Digitisation Workflows* at the National Centre for Biological Sciences, Bangalore. 44 library professionals from 26 Indian institutions learned about our approach to digitisation standards and workflows.

Attendees took part in practical activities introducing them to Optical Character Recognition (OCR) tools that can be used to process texts in Indian languages, and honing skills in strategic approaches to managing digitisation projects.

The event was an opportunity to learn more about cataloguing, digitisation and OCR, and for participants to share experiences, exchange ideas and discuss common standards and best practices.

The event formed part of a series led by the 2CIP project which, among other activities, has been collaborating with research institutions to develop OCR for Bangla.

### International Dunhuang Project



Delegates at the IDP workshop in November 2018. Photo courtesy Luisa Elena Mengoni.

The *International Dunhuang Project (IDP)* is an international collaboration that makes online collections from Dunhuang and other Silk Road sites freely available. The IDP database and website that bring together digitised collections and related information from IDP partner institutions. The IDP encourages the use of these resources through its research activities, professional exchanges and public programme.

In November 2018 the Library hosted a workshop for all IDP partners from China, Japan, France, Russia and Germany, and collaborating organisations from the UK. The event was an opportunity to share the results of work conducted by all institutions and to discuss future plans. The Library's IDP work this year has included the ongoing Bei Shan Tang Foundation-funded *Lotus Sutra Manuscripts Digitisation Project*, which will conserve and digitise nearly 800 Lotus Sutra manuscripts in Chinese language from the Library's Stein Collection.



Domine  
labia me  
a aperi  
es. **Et**  
os  
meum  
annun  
ciabit  
laudem  
tuam.



**D**omi in adiutorium meum  
intende.

**D**omine ad adiuuandum  
me festina.

**G**loria patri et filio: et spiritui sancto.

Sicut erat erat in principio et nunc et  
semper: et in secula seculorum amen. **Inuit.**

**Alleluia.** Ave maria gra plena do' tecum. **V.**

**V**enite exultemus domino iubilanti  
deo salutari nostro praecipemus fa

# Looking ahead

## Dr Allan Sudlow, Head of Research Development



Changes will feature prominently in our next Annual Research Report. I am writing this in the midst of a global pandemic that is changing how, where and when we undertake collaborative research.

An impact of remote working and social distancing on our research activities has been the rapid realisation that now, more than ever, we need to build a sustainable digital infrastructure for research and collaboration across all disciplines. This will rely on talented researchers that have the skills and expertise to maximise its use and impact. In next year's report, we will be outlining collaborations to help build this infrastructure, including launching a shared research repository for UK heritage organisations, and innovative projects that engage, train and support the growing international digital research community of which we are a part.

This will include our involvement in a new £19 million national programme that will take the first steps towards creating a unified virtual 'national collection'. Funded by UKRI and led by AHRC, the five-year research programme *Towards a National Collection* will aim to transform the way that cultural treasures and unique collections located in the UK can be discovered, accessed, researched and enjoyed by audiences across the globe.

As well as new developments, there is also a sense of welcome regeneration. We have been successful in renewing our AHRC-funded collaborative doctoral programme and continue to grow our portfolio of ESRC and other doctoral partnerships. You will see new interdisciplinary work from doctoral studentships, PhD placements and fellowships appearing across next year's report. And one very important renewal for me personally has been the transition in the Research Development Team. You will see new faces and names in the back of this report, as my team from the previous two reports departed for new opportunities over the past year.

I want to thank both teams – past and present – for working so hard to support the development of our research and helping bring this inspiring third report together.

I am conscious that this report will be appearing during a period in which issues of equality, diversity and inclusion, and the problematic histories of cultural collections, have been brought into focus. There is a longstanding challenge for us to shine a light on the colonial pasts of its collections, and to address how these histories feed into current conversations. I hope to be able to report in future years how our staff, students and fellows have contributed to addressing these issues through our research activities.

### Left: The Percy Hours, Add MS 89379 folio 26

This manuscript, made in York c.1280–1290, was once part of same manuscript as the Percy Psalter, Add MS 70000. This section includes the Canticles, the Litany, Office of the Dead, and Hours of the Virgin and of the Holy Spirit. The manuscript has 13 historiated initials in colours on gold grounds, which mostly showing scenes from the lives of Christ and the Virgin, with decorated borders, as well as some marginal scenes of animals, musicians and grotesques. The painting is of high quality, attractive and lively. It is stylistically related to other examples of manuscript illumination from 13th century York, and has the potential to provide insight into the artists and workshops operating in York at this time. This acquisition reunites the Psalter and the Hours and enables researchers to study the manuscript in its entirety.

# Appendices

## Hyperlink references

### Pages 6 – 8

<https://blogs.bl.uk/socialscience/2019/10/past-is-now.html>  
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### Pages 10 – 11

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### Pages 12 – 13

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<https://lastposts.blog/>

### Pages 14 – 15

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<https://ahrc.ukri.org/research/fundedthemesandprogrammes/tanc-opening-uk-heritage-to-the-world/>  
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### Pages 16 – 17

[bl.uk/projects/true-echoes](http://bl.uk/projects/true-echoes)

### Pages 19 – 21

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<https://blogs.kent.ac.uk/bts/ucl.ac.uk/nahrein/visiting-scholarships-scheme/mohammed-jasim>  
<https://blogs.bl.uk/digital-scholarship/2019/10/workshop-on-digitisation-workflows-digital-research-studies-methodologies.html>  
<http://idp.bl.uk/>

### Pages 24

<https://blogs.bl.uk/digitisedmanuscripts/2019/04/reunited-at-last-the-percy-hours-and-percy-psalter.html>

## All new projects that began in 2018–2019

Funding Body	Grant type	Project Title	Lead Research Organisation	Total Award
AHRC	Research Networking for UK–US Collaborations in Digital Scholarship in Cultural Institutions	Single Global Digitisation Dataset	University of Glasgow	£42,918
AHRC	Follow-on Funding	Living Libraries	University of Roehampton	£80,594
AHRC	Centre for Cultural Value Call	National Centre for Cultural Value and Engagement	University of Leeds	£2,000,000
The Arcadia Charitable Foundation	Research Grant	Oral History of Farming, Land Management and Conservation in Post-War Britain	National Life Stories at the British Library	£327,677
Australian Research Council	Research Grant	Establishing a Text for the Next Century: Works of the Brontës	University of New South Wales	£196,773
BEIS	Rutherford Fund	Vijayanagara Research Project	British Library	£28,200
BEIS	Research and Innovation Budget	True Echoes: Reconnecting Cultures with Audio from the Beginning of Recorded Sound	British Library	£66,960
Belspo	International Networking of the Belgian Federal Scientific Institutions	TTHINC (Transformation Through International Collaboration)	Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België (KRB)	£31,000
British Academy	BA/Leverhulme Small Research Grant	The Memoirs of Bulstrode Whitelocke (1605–75): The Politics of Parliamentary Memory	University of Lincoln	£7,575
British Academy	BA/Leverhulme Small Research Grant	19th-century Musicians as Annotators	University of Oxford	£10,000
British Academy	British Academy/JISC Digital Research in the Humanities	F-TEMPO (Full-text Search of Early Music Prints Online)	Goldsmiths, University of London	£10,000
CNRS	International Research Network	Cyclades International Network ("Corpora and Computational Linguistics for Digital Humanities")	Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS) France	£14,000
EU (Horizon 2020)	ERC Synergy Grant	EuQu – The European Qur'an. Islamic Scripture in European Culture and Religion 1150–1850	Spanish National Research Council; Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale"; University of Kent; University of Nantes	£8,615,636
EU (Horizon 2020)	ERC Synergy Grant	DHARMA: The Domestication of Hindu" Asceticism and the Religious Making of South and Southeast Asia	L'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO)	£3,861,000

EU (Marie Curie)	ITN	CLEOPATRA (Cross-lingual Event-centric Open Analytics Research Academy)	Leibniz Universität Hannover	£3,373,330
Institute for Coding	Future Projects Fund	PGCert in Computing for the Cultural Heritage sector	Birkbeck, University of London	£222,424
Leverhulme Trust	Research Grant	True Echoes: Reconnecting Cultures with Audio from the Beginning of Recorded Sound	British Library	£499,912
Oak Spring Garden Foundation	Contract	Cunningham's Chinese Botanical Drawings	Queen Mary, University of London	£9,063
Pelagios Commons	Working Group Small Grant	Web Maps Workshop	British Library	£3,000
Research England	Development Fund	COPIM (Community-led Open Publication Infrastructures for Monographs)	Coventry University	£2,200,000
South West Creative Technologies Network	Immersion Prototype Funding	Immersive Histories – Decoding Complexity	Bath Spa University	£40,000
University College London	UCL Qatar Seed Research Start-up Grant	Pilot Task Force on Gulf Audio Collections	University College London	£20,000

## Collaborative PhD students 2018–2019

Alastair Horne	How Mobile Phones are Changing Storytelling	Bath Spa University
Alice Wickenden	Hans Sloane's Books: An Early Enlightenment Library and its Material Relationships	Queen Mary University of London
Anna Turnham	Elizabeth I and Mary, Queen of Scots	University of Kent
Becky Lawton	Anglo-Saxon Perceptions of the City of Rome: Correspondence and Exchange in the 7th and 8th Centuries	University of Leicester
Carol Butler	Digital Publishing Technologies and the Reader	City University London
Christian Friedrich Poske	Continuity In Change: A Restudy of Arnold Adriaan Bake's Research on the Devotional and Folk Music and Dance of Bengal 1925–1956	SOAS, University of London
Claire McGann	Women's Religious Prophecies in Print: 1640–1660	Lancaster University
Deborah Dawkin	Literary Translation – Genre, Process and Collaboration	University College London
Dominic Bridge	Music Publishing in the British Isles, 1750–1850	University of Liverpool
Emilia Henderson	Franco-Saxon Manuscripts in the 9th Century	University of Leicester
Emmeline Ledgerwood	Re-evaluating the 1980s and 1990s through Life Histories: Politics, Privatisation and the Culture of Government Research	University of Leicester
Hannah Connell	Studying Migration and Diaspora through Russian	King's College London

## Language Publishing

Hannah Silva	Black British Poetry in Performance	University of Stirling
Helen Piel	The Facts of Evolution: Widely Communicated, Mathematically Found(ed), Controversially Discussed. The Working Life of John Maynard Smith (1920–2004)	University of Leeds
James Ritzema	The Printing and Publication of Sacred Music in England, 1603–1649	Royal Holloway, University of London
Jenny Norton-Wright	Shifting Landscapes: Mapping the Intellectual Writing Traditions of Islamic Southeast Asia	SOAS, University of London
Jeremy Brown	Maps and the Italian Grand Tour, 1660–c.1824	Royal Holloway, University of London
Jodie Collins	American Political Pamphlets 1920–1945	University of Sussex
Joe Mulhern	Britain, the British and Slavery in Brazil, c.1822–1888	University of Liverpool /University of Durham
Liam Markey	Mediating Militarism: Chronicling 100 years of British 'Military Victimhood' from Print to Digital, 1918–2018	University of Liverpool
Lucy Hanks	Mediated Expression: Self-Censorship in Nineteenth-Century Women's Manuscripts	University of Manchester
Luke Butler	Southeast-Asian Illuminated Manuscripts: A Study of the Maritime Silk Road Using Scientific Imaging and AI	Nottingham Trent University
Maria Julios Costa	Mediated Contact and the Mitigation of Outgroup Prejudice: A Longitudinal Study of Media Discourse, the Modulation of National Identity Threat and Anti-Immigrant Bias	Lancaster University
Martin Rooke	Media Representations of Health Risk	University of Kent
Naomi Oppenheim	Future Pasts: British-Caribbean Popular Culture and the Politics of History, 1948–1998	University College London
Pardaad Chamsaz	The Secret of Creation: Stefan Zweig's Writing Read Through his Manuscript Collection	University of Bristol
Pauline McGonagle	'Disinheritance' and Constructions of Identity in the Works of Ruth Praver Jhabvala	University of Exeter
Rosie Higman	Open Access and the Role of the National Library	University of Sheffield
Ruth Byrne	Attitudes to Immigrants in the 19th century: Using Very Large Historical Corpora for Socio-Historical Research	University of Lancaster
Sasha Valeri Millwood	The Music of Thea Musgrave: An Analysis Based on the s Manuscript Source	University of Glasgow
Will Burgess	Conceptualising the Public Museum in Enlightenment Britain	Queen Mary University of London

## PhD and early career research placements 2018–2019

Alice O'Driscoll	Women's History Online Resources	University of Cambridge
Bridget Moynihan	Investigating Anne McLaren's Notebooks	University of Edinburgh
Charlotte James	Women's History Online Resources	University of Nottingham
Claudia Treacher	George Orwell's Collection of Political Pamphlets	University of Brighton
Daniela Jimenez	North American Migrant Narratives	University of California, Los Angeles
Emily Roy	Analysing Topographical Image Making c.1600–1824	University of Cambridge
Erin McCloskey	Examining the Role of Internal Engagement and Communications in the British Library	Canterbury Christ Church University
Hannah Rodger	Digitisation of Archives: Benefits and Opportunities	University of York
Jiechen Liu	Communicating International Engagement at the British Library	Goldsmiths, University of London
John Richards	Trade Literature in the British Library Collection	SOAS, University of London
Lewis Ryder	Communicating International Engagement at the British Library	University of Manchester
Lucas Giles	Assessing the Impact of the British Library's Major Heritage Acquisitions	University of Cambridge
Lucy Carolan	Art, Poetry and Memory: Contemporary UK Artists' Books	Newcastle University
Mateja Koltaj	Soft Power and International Working	University of Kent
Rita Dal Martello	Chinese Works of Art in the British Library Visual Arts Collections	University College London
Tsering Samdrup	The Treasures of Danzan Ravjaa	SOAS, University of London
Vivek Gupta	Illumination in Persian manuscripts	SOAS, University of London

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[bl.uk/research-collaboration](https://bl.uk/research-collaboration)

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