

British Library Code of Good Research Practice

July 2018

1. Research at the British Library

Research is a core purpose of the British Library, as set out in *Living Knowledge*. Alongside support for research of all kinds through its Reading Rooms and online resources, the Library has an active role as an independent research organisation. This research activity serves a range of purposes and takes place across the organisation. For example, staff undertake research as part of curation and collection development, as part of service development and delivery, as part of infrastructure projects, and in support of cultural and learning programmes. Research is conducted both individually and in collaboration with others – and in contexts that range from ‘business as usual’, to on-site placements and fellowships, and to major multi-partner projects and collaborations funded by external bodies such as universities, Research Councils, government departments, trusts and charities.

The Library’s Research Development team was established in July 2015 with a remit to develop the Library’s research profile, funding, governance and capacity through engagement with staff and the research community across all disciplines. The team’s remit includes coordination of internal Library processes to ensure new research projects and collaborations have appropriate approval and support.

The British Library Research Strategy Group is an internal working group to oversee co-ordinated development, management, evaluation and communication of the Library’s strategy to fulfil its purpose as an independent research organisation. A sub-committee of the Research Strategy Group manages the Library’s research ethics approvals processes and governance.

2. Scope of this Code of Practice

This Code of Practice sets out standards of performance and conduct expected of anyone engaged in research for or on behalf of the Library. It is designed to ensure that this research is conducted to the highest standards of professionalism, honesty and integrity, and that any ethical considerations of the research are appropriately managed, including through submission of a Research Ethics Approval Form if necessary (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2).

The Code of Practice has been developed by the Research Development team, drawing on the expertise and best practice of colleagues across the Library, and in liaison with the Research Strategy Group. It has been informed by external policies and guidelines, including the *Universities UK Concordat on Research Integrity*, the *RCUK Policy and Guidelines on Governance of Good Research Conduct* and the *UK Research Office Code of Practice for Research*, as well as the current research ethics and good research practice policies and statements published by a range of UK Higher Education Institutions and Independent Research Organisations.

This document should be read alongside the related British Library policies and guidelines listed in Appendix 3.

The Code of Practice is intended to underpin the Library's activities as an independent research organisation. It does not apply to external research, supported by the Reading Rooms or online services, but in which the Library is otherwise not actively involved. Research use of heritage acquisitions is addressed separately under the remit of the Library's Heritage Acquisitions Group and governed by the Library's Ethical Future Acquisitions Policy.

Therefore, in the context of this document, 'research' means any other form of research – either for the Library alone or in collaboration with other research organisations (see below) – that goes beyond the Library's role as a research information provider. All Library staff, research students and visiting researchers are required to consult this Code of Practice and agree that they will adhere to its principles prior to undertaking research that meets that definition.

Please contact the Research development team (Research.Development@bl.uk) with any queries about the scope or applicability of this document.

3. Collaborative research

The Library is involved in numerous research projects in partnership and collaboration with other research organisations.

In many such cases, the project will be led by the partner organisation and managed primarily through that organisation's research governance and research ethics processes. The Library does not wish to duplicate efforts. In some research collaborations, the relevant research ethics concerns may be addressed by the lead research organisation and/or other bodies or sponsors involved in the project. Similarly, these questions may be covered by legislative and other UK and international government requirements of relevance to the research.

However, in such cases it is essential that the British Library staff involved in the project continue to consult this Code of Practice. In particular, for projects governed by the policies and procedures of external partners, British Library staff must ensure that these processes cover all ethical aspects of the project. If there are any research ethics questions that relate specifically to the Library, or to the Library's specific role in the project, these must be addressed separately through the Library's own research ethics approvals process, outlined in Appendix A.

In developing new research collaborations or partnerships, Library staff must consult the Research Development and Legal and Contracts Services teams (see below) for guidance on whether a formal collaboration agreement is required and what this should cover.

► Commissions for Collaboration Agreements:

Instructions for work on collaboration agreements should be made by emailing legal-and-contracts-services@bl.uk or the Legal and Contracts Services office administrator (emma.wilson@bl.uk).

Instructions should give full and clear details on what is required and any contractual documentation that needs reviewing, including any other relevant documentation referred to in the contract. The Office Administrator will acknowledge receipt of instruction and state turnaround time for work. The standard turnaround time is 4 weeks from receipt for a contract review/draft.

Any collaboration agreement must reflect the appropriate intellectual property policies and accurately reflect all the IP the British Library contributes to the project. If you wish to discuss this please contact the Head of Intellectual Property (ben.white@bl.uk).

4. Principles of good research practice

i. Integrity

Researchers should follow the integrity principles of the *Universities UK Research Concordat* (p. 11): honesty, rigour, transparency, care and respect.

Researchers must present their credentials and qualifications honestly and ensure that all participants understand the research process and context. This includes how the research will be funded, the proposed research methods, the anticipated outcomes and outputs, and the use that will be made of any research data that will be created through the project.

Consent must be freely given and informed – whether that is consent to be named in the research or to remain anonymous. Rights to privacy should be guaranteed.

Researchers should consider any social, political or cultural sensitivities that may be affected by the research or its outcomes, and consult accordingly with partners and representatives of those likely to be affected. For research conducted overseas, researchers should make themselves aware of any special cultural, legal or social considerations in the host country that may inform the appropriate consent process.

Potential conflicts of interest (whether financial, personal, or academic) should be disclosed by the researcher and discussed with their line manager as part of the Library's internal approvals process for new research projects and collaborations. If appropriate, a Research Ethics Approval form should be submitted (see Appendix 1).

Purchasing and other expenditure by the Library of funds for research should take place in accordance with the Library's financial regulations.

ii. Openness

Research should be openly discussed, scrutinised, questioned and disseminated – in so far as permitted by data protection requirements and any confidentiality undertakings to third parties or sponsors, including in respect of Intellectual Property Rights (see below) and commercially sensitive information, or in respect of pre-election purdah guidelines.

Researchers should aim to disseminate their research as widely as possible, and delays in publishing or disseminating research should be kept to a minimum. The British Library supports the principle that research should be evaluated based on merit and not based on where it is published, and is a signatory to the [San Francisco Declaration of Research Assessment](#) (DORA).

Once results have been published, researchers should make available relevant data and materials to other researchers on request, provided that this is consistent with any ethics approvals and consents that cover data and materials and any intellectual property rights pertaining to them.

See below for guidance on the Library's approach to Open Access in Research.

iii. Professional standards

Researchers are accountable to society, their professions, the British Library and its staff, any collaborators, partners, volunteers and students involved in the research and, in particular, to the funder of the research. Researchers must ensure that any research undertaken complies with any funder terms and conditions relating to the project.

Researchers should however strive for editorial integrity and remain alert to the pressure that can be exerted by particular interest groups.

Researchers must comply with all legal requirements (e.g. copyright and data protection law, the Human Rights Act) and adhere to standards of any professional body of which they are members or to which the research relates.

iv. Attribution and acknowledgement

Research data and results should be accurate and demonstrably the work of the author(s). Direct and indirect contributions of colleagues, collaborators or other individuals must be acknowledged where appropriate.

All funding sources must be acknowledged in any publication or publicity.

v. Training & Leadership

Experienced researchers and senior managers should create an environment in which all researchers are encouraged to develop their skills, in which the open exchange of ideas is fostered, and which is conducive to good research practice.

Staff with specific research training needs are encouraged to discuss these with their line manager and the Research Development team.

See Appendix 3 for details of institutional guidelines and policies governing the supervision of research placements and collaborative PhD projects.

vi. Safety and security

Research must be carried out in conditions which are safe for researchers and participants, and in compliance with the Library's Health & Safety policy and its policy on Staff Use of the Collections. Collection items are to be used in line with the rules and procedures laid out in the Staff Use of the Collections policy (see Appendix 3).

Risk assessments should be carried out prior to the commencement of research. Where applicable, steps should be taken to minimise risk of damage to the environment.

Personal data must be processed fairly, securely, and lawfully, in accordance with applicable data protection and privacy laws and relevant institutional policies regarding the use of confidential, personal and/or sensitive data.

5. Research Data

Research data are primary sources of information produced and consumed during the research process. As such, they are key to the reproducibility and provenance of research outcomes. As well as ensuring the reliability of their research, researchers have a duty to ensure that the maximum value is gained from the public funds invested in the creation data.

To uphold these principles, the requirements of the project funders should be understood and applied during the course of projects. In addition, the institutional data management and sharing requirements of project partners should also be followed.

Research Councils UK have a common [data policy](#) and each funding organisation has their own more [detailed requirements](#) on what projects must do to ensure their data are appropriately managed and shared.

In the absence of any detailed requirements from project funders or partner institutions, the Library expects researchers to make the data they create as openly available as possible, in a timely manner, while still adhering to all legal and ethical requirements for the collection, use, storage and sharing of data. Particular attention should be paid to the requirements of data protection legislation – including the [Data Protection Act 2018](#) – where personal data is involved. Other aspects to carefully consider are:

- Protection of intellectual property rights
- Maintenance of confidentiality where undertakings have been made to third parties
- Cultural sensitivities

Collaborative projects should have clear responsibilities for data creation, management and archiving between the project partners and these should be set out in any formal collaboration agreement and data management plan.

Data management plans ensure the appropriate management of data during and beyond the life of the project, and the plan should be developed before any data are generated. Where responsibility for data creation, publication and, or archiving lie with the British Library, Library project staff should ensure that they are a primary author of the plan and consult the British Library Data Management Principles (accessible via the Research Development section of the BL Wiki; see Appendix 4 for relevant contacts).

6. Open Access

The Library is committed to disseminating its research and scholarship as widely as possible. It supports the principle that that publicly-funded research outputs should be freely accessible to the global research community as well as the public. This increases impact and citations, facilitates re-use and supports the Library's mission.

As an Independent Research Organization, the Library expects its own staff, research students and visiting researchers to make their research outputs available in a timely manner, and to make these outputs as openly available as possible, preferably under a Creative Commons attribution licence (i.e. CC BY).

Most major UK and international research funders (such as UK Research Councils, Wellcome Trust and EU Horizon 2020) have policies that mandate open access for journal articles and data that are derived from research supported by their funding. Researchers undertaking or contributing to externally-funded research should consult the most up-to-date version of the funder's requirements in this respect (for an overview see <http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/juliet/>). For advice on this, please contact Torsten Reimer, Head of Research Services.

Almost all academics journals will allow you to make a copy of the final peer-reviewed manuscript (as opposed to the typeset publisher's version) publicly available in a repository, although this is often subject to an embargo period. For journal Open Access policies see <http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/>

Some academic journals charge authors an Article Processing Charge (APC) to make the version of record of an article available online on the date of publication. Where such an option is available, regardless of whether it is free or an APC is charged, articles should be made available under a Creative Commons attribution licence (i.e. CC BY).

Some funders who require the outcomes of their funded research to be Open Access will cover the APCs. If the research is led by a member of British Library staff and is of an importance that merits publication in a journal that charges publication fees, the Library will consider paying an APC – though its ability to provide this kind of financial support this will depend on whether an appropriate budget is available. Please consult the Research Development team to discuss this.

7. Intellectual property and copyright

The Library expects researchers to be as open as possible in discussing their work with other researchers and the public. However, researchers should not infringe on any existing intellectual property rights in the conduct of their research or in its dissemination.

Researchers must maintain clear and accurate records of the permissions process and evidence of consent should be securely stored with Corporate Procurement Unit.

In collaborative research projects, all parties must ensure that there is clarity and agreement, prior to the start of the project, regarding the ownership and use of any arising intellectual property. This includes the results of the research, any data and samples used or created in the course of the research, as well as questionnaires, interviews and transcripts, recordings and images.

British Library staff should seek advice where necessary to ensure that the Library's intellectual property rights are observed.

To ensure that the Library's intellectual property rights and policies are observed, British Library staff should seek advice where necessary from the Head of Intellectual Property (ben.white@bl.uk) or the Copyright and Licensing Department.

Specialist advice on the copyright and IP implications of research involving text and data mining may be available from the Library's Digital Scholarship team and the other relevant Library staff listed in Appendix 4.

8. Ensuring ethical practice in research at the British Library

Research conducted for or on behalf of the Library must be undertaken according to the highest ethical standards. Appendix 1 and 2 provide details of British Library processes for ensuring that these standards are maintained.

When proposing or planning research, it is essential that staff consider the ethical ramifications of the project or activity as early as possible. Any research ethics questions or concerns need to be addressed well before the start of the activity to allow time for a Research Ethics Approval Form to be submitted, if required. This is the case for both individual and collaborative research projects (see above).

In the British Library context, ethical questions are likely to be of particular pertinence to the following areas of research:

i. Oral history research

Oral history interviewers have strong ethical obligations to fully inform interviewees of how their words will be used. Its importance is heightened if the research involves vulnerable groups or the topic of the research itself is sensitive (mental health or abuse, for instance).

Since oral history research relies on interviewing people, it is subject to institutional research ethics review and approval. See Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 for details of British Library Research Ethics approval processes.

Interviewers and interviewees must sign a standard legal release form as soon as the interview is complete. A British Library Oral History Recording Agreement is available for this purpose – a copy can be found on the Oral History Society's website (see also the key contacts in Appendix 4): http://www.ohs.org.uk/ethics/ohs_recording_agreement.pdf

This must be signed by the interviewers and interviewees as soon as the interview is complete. It should also include any restrictions the interviewee wishes to place on how the interview will be used.

Maintaining the anonymity of an interviewee's identity does not normally apply to oral history interviews, unless stated in the release form. However, throughout an oral history project, researchers are likely to obtain confidential and private data about identifiable, living individuals that must be properly protected in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 (e.g. telephone numbers and addresses, opinions about third parties, any sensitive personal information about

anyone). It should also be noted that until the release form has been signed, all interview information must be treated as confidential, private data.

For a more detailed explanation of these provisions, researchers should refer to the ethical and legal guidelines issued by the Oral History Society: <http://www.ohs.org.uk/advice/ethical-and-legal/>

British Library staff should seek advice from the relevant staff listed in Appendix 4 where necessary to ensure data protection is observed

ii. Research involving the archives or records of living people

At the British Library, material from the archives of living people will have been subject to a data protection review by British Library staff before it can be used for research purposes. The review will determine what sensitive personal information about living people is contained within the collection. It will, if appropriate, identify material to be reserved from access for a given period of time under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998 and other relevant legislation.

An archive will usually contain material from multiple copyright holders. Researchers should abide by UK copyright law and the British Library's copyright policy and should always seek permission for publication and quotation, where not covered by the quotation exception, in accordance with these guidelines.

It is worth being mindful that fostering and maintaining a good relationship with depositors and copyright holders can crucially underpin successful research work relating to the archives of living people. Building trust with depositors and rights holders will help researchers to facilitate conversations with rights holders and others as needed at a later date. Please use the standard forms for deposit, which include questions relating to copyright.

Researchers planning digitisation projects should bear in mind that archives may contain sensitive personal information about living people that has not been reserved under the terms of any specific legislation but may nevertheless be unsuitable for online publication, particularly where it concerns third parties who may be unaware that their personal information is held by the British Library.

9. Research misconduct

The Library defines research misconduct as non-compliance with the Code of Practice. This comprises behaviour which does not apply the expected standards outlined in this document. It is understood that this can include, but is not limited to:

- Plagiarism – the copying or use of any work without appropriate permission or acknowledgement
- Piracy – the deliberate exploitation of ideas from others without permission or acknowledgement
- Fraud – intentional deception or the deliberate fabrication or falsification of results
- Conspiracy – assisting in the concealment and failure to report misconduct by others

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- Collusion – aiding in the concealment of research misconduct by others
- Interference – intentional damage to, or removal of, the research-related property of another
- Non-compliance – the intentional non-compliance of existing obligations with interested parties (e.g. funding bodies, partner organisations, professional bodies) including accounting requirements, research ethics, and health and safety regulations.

Research Misconduct does not include honest error or honest differences in the design, execution, interpretation or judgement in evaluating research methods or results; or misconduct unrelated to the research process.

Researchers are expected to understand that the Library regards Research Misconduct as a serious disciplinary offence.

The Library encourages all researchers to report cases of suspected misconduct, and recommends that they do so in a responsible and appropriate manner. Where matters of research misconduct or non-compliance cannot be adequately dealt with through existing Library staff policies and governance processes, they should be raised with the Research Strategy Group.

Appendix 1: Research ethics guidance and approvals process

It is essential that staff consider the ethical ramifications of any new research project or activity as early as possible.

If appropriate, a Research Ethics Approval Form (Appendix 2) must be submitted to the Research Strategy Group's Sub-committee for Research Ethics. This is chaired by the Head of Collections and Curation (Kristian Jensen) and comprised of the Head of Higher Education (Maja Maricevic), the Head of Research Development (Allan Sudlow), the Postgraduate and Research Development Manager (James Perkins), with the Research Information Support Officer (Diana Siclovan) as secretariat.

Approval forms should be submitted via email to Research.Development@bl.uk. The Research Ethics Sub-committee will aim to consider all applications within 2 weeks of receiving the form.

The Library should assume primary responsibility for ensuring that ethical practice is maintained in the research projects and collaborations for which it is the Lead Research Organisation. Collaborative projects led by other Research Organisations may be governed primarily by that organisation's research ethics policies and procedures. However, British Library staff must ensure that these processes cover all ethical aspects of the project. If there are any research ethics questions that relate specifically to the Library, or to the Library's specific role in the project, these must be addressed separately by the Library.

- *Do I need to submit a Research Ethics Approval Form?*

The Research Development team is the first contact point for any Library staff unsure if or how they need to seek research ethics approvals. Colleagues listed in Appendix 4 may be able to provide additional advice about specific queries relating to their areas of expertise.

The Research Development team will advise Library staff on a case-by-case basis whether or not a Research Ethics Approval Form is required. As a general rule, the Library would expect a form to be submitted if the answer to any of the following questions is affirmative, unless there is clear evidence that all necessary approvals have been sought and gained via other routes:

- Does the research involve human participants?
- Does the research involve the use or creation of data relating to directly identifiable human subjects?
- Does the research require particular attention to be paid to any aspects of intellectual property or copyright?
- Does the research involve use of animals, human remains or tissue?
- Does the research involve any conflicts of interest?
- Does the research require a high level of political or cultural sensitivity?
- Is there a significant potential for the research to cause a risk of physical, psychological or social harm to participants and others affected by it?
- Does the research carry the potential to cause a risk of damage to the environment?
- Does the research require travel to countries where the safety of project participants might be in jeopardy?

Appendix 2: Research Ethics Approval Form

A Microsoft Word copy of the form is available from the [Research Development](#) team or on the [Research Development Wiki](#).

This application should be submitted along with (i) a copy of the **Research Projects Justification Template** and (ii) **copies of any supporting documentation** which relate to the ethical considerations of the research proposed e.g. research ethic committee documentation submitted by collaborating partner(s) to their host organisations.

Name of applicant	
Project or Proposal title	
Outline of any aspects of the research that have ethical considerations e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involvement of human participants - Use of personal data - Potential conflicts of interest - Political or cultural sensitivity - Risk of harm to participants - Risk of harm to the environment - Concerns about safety of participants - Please limit your response to 500 words max.	
Outline anything else that needs to be considered in the context of the British Library’s Code of Good Research Practice	
How, and by whom, will the Ethical Considerations outlined above be managed? If the research will involve use of personal data, please outline how you will adhere to the requirements of data protection legislation. Please limit your response to 500 words max.	

Please return completed form to Research.Development@bl.uk for review and approval by the Research Strategy Group’s Sub-committee for Research Ethics

British Library Ethics Approval:

On behalf of the British Library Research Strategy Group Sub-committee for Research Ethics, I confirm that the research proposed in this application will be managed in line with the British Library Code of Good Research Practice.

Signature

Date

Comments from Review Indicate any additional ethical considerations that BL staff involved in this proposal must consider to ensure that it complies with the Library’s Code of Good Research Practice.	
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Appendix 3: Related British Library policies and guidelines

The following policies and guidelines are of particular relevance to research at the British Library and are available to British Library staff via the 'Policies' section of the Library's Intranet:

- British Library Policy on Research Grants
- Access and Reuse Policy
- Security Policy
- Conduct at Work Policy
- PhD placement code of practice
- Collaborative PhD code of practice
- Policy on Staff use of the Collections
- Collection Security
- BL research data policy
- Internal approvals process for research projects
- Heritage Acquisitions Group policies and guidelines
- Travel to Hostile Environments
- Information Security Policy
- Personal Information Policy
- Copyright Policy
- Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Clearance and Digitisation Projects
- Restricted Funds Policy

Appendix 4: Relevant BL expertise and contacts

Name	Expertise	Email
Rob Perks	Oral history research	Rob.Perks@bl.uk
Rachel Foss	Research using the archives of living people	Rachel.Foss@bl.uk
John Fryer	Data protection and information security	Jonathan.Fryer@bl.uk
Rachael Kotarski	Research data and data management plans	Rachael.Kotarski@bl.uk
Torsten Reimer	Open Access	Torsten.Reimer@bl.uk
Matt Lambert	Copyright	Matthew.Lambert@bl.uk
Ben White	Intellectual Property / Access and Reuse	Ben.White@bl.uk
Emma Digby	Collections security	Emma.Digby@bl.uk
Nicola Deal	Health and safety and risk assessments	Nicola.Deal@bl.uk
Ricky Olejnik	Legal and Contracts Services	Ricky.Olejnik@bl.uk