

Greek Papyri of Late Antique Egypt

Reference: 2017-1-TOT

Supervisor	Peter Toth, Curator of Ancient and Medieval Manuscripts
Department, Location	Western Heritage Collections, St Pancras, London
Start date/timeframe	Mid-January 2018
Duration	3 months (or part-time equivalent – see below) <i>For a part-time placement the student would be required to spend a minimum of 3 days/week on site at the Library</i>
Remote-working	This project does not offer scope for remote working – the placement must be conducted on site at the British Library

Context for placement

The British Library houses one of the most important collections of Greek papyri in the world, comprising unique witnesses of Greek classical literature, early biblical and Christian fragments and a large corpus of Greek documentary papyri. The Greek papyri, together with a significant amount of further documents in Egyptian and Coptic, statues, utensils, ostraca and other objects now kept in the British Museum, derive from various excavation sites in Egypt and bear witness to the richness of the Greco-Roman Culture in Late Antique Egypt. The Library's large collection of more than 3000 Greek papyri will be digitised and published online with new catalogue entries.

The PhD placement would contribute towards the cataloguing associated with this digitisation project, enabling the digitised images to be described and published in the Library's online catalogue and viewer. The placement student will also contribute to blogposts, tweets, and to other library events in order to promote the collection and its international importance for the study of Classical and Late Antiquity.

Expected tasks and outcomes

Cataloguing: The student will learn how to catalogue the papyri according to the Library's standards in order to produce enhanced records for the Library's online catalogue in parallel with digitisation proceedings. This will also entail reviewing existing descriptions, comparing with those in other international databases and publications, updating records and adding bibliography. The student will provide **assistance** with the selection and delivery of the material, liaising with colleagues in the Library's conservation and photo studios, and checking image quality. Realistic targets for the amount of cataloguing work to be completed during the placement will be discussed and agreed with the student as part of the induction process.

Promotion: The student will contribute blog posts to the Library's [Medieval Manuscripts blog](#) and tweets about newly added/identified pieces. There will also be opportunities to contribute to internal and external library events with specialist knowledge of papyri. This is likely to include contributing to 'show-and-tell' events about the collection and to guided tours and other research or public engagement events. The student will be encouraged to contribute descriptive text about digitised items for the Library's website. Depending on the timing of the placement in relation to exhibition schedules, there may also be the opportunity to write labels for any items that are selected to feature in displays or exhibitions in the Library's Treasures Gallery.

Research: The student will be encouraged to undertake their own research relating to the Library's collection of papyri and to write up an article on their finds and discoveries for submission to peer-reviewed journals. Potential areas of research will be discussed with candidates at interview stage and refined and agreed with the supervisor at the start of the placement, but could include – for example – articles about discoveries at the Library or an unedited papyrus, or offering a new perspective on an already known piece.

Training and experience expected to be gained by student through the placement

The student will receive training in the handling, reading and cataloguing of papyri, as well as gain first-hand practical experience of their conservation and imaging.

An induction into the Library's manuscript cataloguing system (IAMS) will be provided by our internal specialists. Handling training will be provided by the Library's Preventive Conservation Team. The placement supervisor will provide advice on how to accommodate internal papyri cataloguing standards to the Library's internal requirements.

Contributing to events and tours will provide experience of public engagement, whilst writing blog posts will

help to develop expertise in communicating with a wide public audience. More broadly, this is an opportunity to experience the everyday life of a living collection. The student will be developing and applying their knowledge of Ancient Greek language and literature in collaboration with a team of colleagues of varying backgrounds.

Required knowledge and skills

This placement requires the student to have the necessary skills to read Greek papyri. Knowledge of Ancient Greek language and literature is therefore **essential**. Knowledge of Latin language and literature would also be an advantage.

We are ideally looking for someone who is familiar with history, culture and religion in Late Antique Egypt. Some previous training in papyrology and Greek palaeography is desirable (but not essential).