

# Exploring our ‘Endangered Archives’ Projects in Africa

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<b>Supervisor</b>	Nora McGregor (Digital Curator) & Jody Butterworth (Endangered Archives Programme Curator)
<b>Department, Location</b>	Digital Scholarship, St Pancras
<b>Start date/timeframe</b>	This placement can take place any time between May 2018 and April 2019. A mutually convenient start date can be agreed with the supervisors.
<b>Duration</b>	<b>3 months</b> (or part-time equivalent – see below) <i>For a part-time placement, the student would be required to spend a minimum of <b>1 day/week</b> on site at the Library</i>
<b>Remote-working</b>	An element of remote working would be feasible for this placement – to be agreed with the supervisors in advance.

<b>Context for placement</b>
<p>The Endangered Archives Programme (EAP) is a grants giving programme, funded by Arcadia and administered by the British Library, which aims to preserve archival material from around the world that is in danger of destruction, neglect or physical deterioration. Since 2004, the programme has provided 338 grants to successful applicants to locate endangered archival collections in over 90 countries, arrange their transfer to a suitable local archival home where possible, create digital copies of the material, and to deposit the copies with local institutions and the British Library. The programme sits alongside the Digital Research team, within the Digital Scholarship Department, who support innovative research with the Library’s digital collections and data.</p> <p>EAP, in conjunction with the Digital Research Team, is keen to better understand, through the use of digital scholarship methods, the character and make-up of the 99 successfully-funded projects relating to Africa (<a href="https://eap.bl.uk/search/site/africa">https://eap.bl.uk/search/site/africa</a>). Our aim is to investigate whether a visual exploration of the data might provide us with actionable information to help the programme raise awareness of these collections for researchers, and increase archival coverage across Africa. For instance, might plotting and visualising the various characteristics of these collections reveal anything about archival priorities in certain countries? By analysing the extent of the collections, are we able to identify trends and gaps across the region that the programme might actively address? Could such visualisations be a valuable tool in raising awareness of collections with researchers and informing potential future grant applicants?</p>
<b>Expected tasks and outcomes</b>
<p>The PhD placement student will liaise closely at the outset with the Digital Curator for Asian&amp;African Collections and the Curator of the Endangered Archives Programme. They will plan the delivery of one or more visualisations drawing both on data about the digitised collections and the grant applications received by the programme. Examples of data that could be used include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Material types (sound, manuscripts, correspondence, photographs, etc.)</li> <li>• Archival locations</li> <li>• Languages</li> <li>• Scripts</li> <li>• Subjects</li> <li>• Characteristics of grant applicants &amp; host institutions (for instance average distance of applicant from original location of archival material)</li> <li>• Recent historical events (independence movements, war) which might have played a part in spurring applications to EAP</li> </ul> <p>Throughout the placement the student will be asked to communicate interesting information gleaned from their analysis via the Library’s <a href="#">Digital Scholarship blog</a>, and via the Digital Research team <a href="#">Twitter account</a>. They will also be given the opportunity to deliver a staff talk or similar activity to share their research findings internally with British Library staff or other relevant stakeholders.</p>

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

The successful student will be provided with a detailed induction to the British Library and will enjoy valuable access to the collections and expertise of the Digital Scholarship department and Asian&African Collections team.

During the research placement, the student will have access to all appropriate training and public events offered by the Library, such as the talks and workshops offered in the Library's 'Digital Scholarship' and '21st Century Curators' staff training programmes.

This placement is a chance to apply research and analytical skills developed through the PhD to a specific strategic context. It is an opportunity to explore how digital humanities skills can be used to support the work of a major cultural institution and inform the development of a successful international grants-giving programme. There will also be opportunities to engage wider public audiences in the project through writing for the BL's blogs, enhancing communication skills in the process.

**Required knowledge and skills**

We are looking for someone with the qualitative and quantitative research skills required to undertake the research outlined above, and to present, interpret and explain their findings in an accessible manner to the public.

This placement would suit a candidate with strong IT skills pursuing a research degree in areas such as data visualisation, statistics, Digital Humanities, mapping and spatial analysis, data science and digital history.

The successful candidate will have an interest in gaining an understanding of African history and geography and the ability to learn to use software tools independently, by following tutorials and documentation (with some help from BL staff).

This is a training and development opportunity open to current PhD students only. It is not intended to lead to a permanent post at the Library. Please note that the Library is unable to provide a stipend for PhD research placements. Applicants must obtain the support of their PhD supervisor and Graduate Tutor (or someone in an equivalent senior academic management role) in advance and, as part of their process, consult their HEI to ascertain what funding is available to support them.