

First World War French posters

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Supervisors	Teresa Vernon (Lead Curator) and Irène Fabry-Tehranchi (Curator), Romance Collections
Department, Location	European and Americas Collections, St Pancras
Start date/timeframe	We would ideally want the placement to take place any time between May 2018 and December 2018, although a placement at a later date would be possible (up to April 2019).
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	If required, the placement could be undertaken working from home for 2 days/week (or part-time equivalent) – this would involve working from photographs to be taken when on site.

Context for placement
<p>The Romance Collections curatorial team, part of European and Americas Collections (E&A), develops, manages and promotes post-1850 printed collections in the Romance languages, covering monographs, periodicals, electronic resources and ephemera. The ephemera collections include six boxes of French posters from the First World War that were acquired in 1917. They are mostly propaganda posters and include advertisements for war loans, calls for charitable donations and official proclamations. One third of the posters are illustrated (a further 117 illustrated posters, formerly part of this collection, are currently on long-term loan to the V&A), while the rest are text-based. An important part of the curatorial role is to make our collections visible and accessible, and to promote them via social media and events aimed at academic audiences and the wider public. E&A is exploring ways of commemorating the anniversary of the end of the First World War through a series of themed events in 2018. This PhD research placement will contribute to making the collection of French First World War posters visible in the online catalogue and placing them in context.</p> <p>The PhD research placement student will research, catalogue and promote the posters, allowing better access, discovery and awareness of this largely hidden collection. The collection is currently catalogued at 'top level' only, which hides the wealth and appeal of the posters. They constitute an invaluable primary material for research and the anniversary of the First World War has raised renewed interest in this field, both from academics and the wider public. The placement will improve the discoverability of the French First World War posters and promote them to as wide an audience as possible.</p>
Expected tasks and outcomes
<p>The placement student will catalogue the c. 350 French posters within the collection, of which one third are illustrated, researching and recording their key features (creating organisation, artist, date, location, and context) through the library metadata spreadsheet system, so that the records can be made available on the British Library's main catalogue, <i>Explore</i>. To assist with this process, the placement student will take pictures of the posters for internal use, record and dissemination (with the departmental camera).</p> <p>Complementing the cataloguing tasks, the student will be expected to contribute posts about the collection for the Library's European Studies blog, as well as undertaking related publicity and promotion via the department's Twitter account.</p> <p>Depending on the interests and preference of the student, additional outputs to promote and publicise the posters could potentially include one or more of the following: a collection guide for the Romance Collections subject pages on the BL website, linking to an entry on the external Posters Network website; a staff talk; an outreach event for a general public audience; an article for publication in either the French Studies Library Group Annual Review or the Electronic British Library Journal (or other academic publication). There is also the potential to consult with other organisations in the UK and France about their collections of posters. For example, a further collection of 117 illustrated posters, formerly part of the Library's collections, is now on long-term loan to the V&A Museum. Specific placement activities in addition to the 'core' cataloguing task and blogs will be discussed and agreed with the BL supervisors at the start of the project. However, the student will</p>

have considerable autonomy in deciding on research methods and themes. Potential themes (though these are only suggestions) would include: promoting national identity (e.g. the French soldier as protector of the nation, recovery of Alsace Lorraine, etc.); sustaining the morale of the home front (e.g. food conservation campaigns); demonstrating solidarity between the French army and the Allies.

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

The placement student will receive an initial induction to the British Library, the department, the collections and the place of ephemera and posters collections within them, as well as their handling and preservation. The student will then be asked to undertake an overview of the collection, to begin to identify research themes and questions. This will help the student and the BL supervisors to consider in more detail some the options for promoting the posters and disseminating placement outcomes.

As far as the cataloguing tasks are concerned, the student will be given detailed instruction in how to record cataloguing data for the posters through the library internal spreadsheet system. Regarding the anticipated blog posts, they will receive support and feedback on the use of social media tools and the development of writing skills, in accordance with departmental guidelines and practice.

The student will be introduced to colleagues relevant to the placement, be invited to team and departmental meetings, and encouraged to attend relevant staff training and public events at the Library. Progress would be monitored via daily catch-ups for the first two weeks, with weekly catch-ups thereafter.

The placement provides an opportunity to learn about the handling, preservation, nature and history of the British Library collection, and the French WW1 posters collection specifically. It is an opportunity to gain specialist cataloguing skills, knowledge of bibliographic standards and systems and to understand the importance of metadata, its creation, processing and management from a librarian's perspective. It is also an opportunity to apply transferable research and language skills in this context. The contribution to the European Studies blog and Twitter account will develop their skills in writing for a wide audience.

Required knowledge and skills

This placement is open to PhD students from all disciplines and academic backgrounds; however, knowledge of and an interest in early-twentieth century European history and/or visual arts would be an advantage.

Good knowledge of written French is essential, as is some proficiency in the use of Excel and the ability to input data with a high degree of accuracy.

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.