

Identifying and using map images in born-digital collections

Reference: 2019-9-REE

Supervisor	Gethin Rees, Lead curator Digital Map Collections
Department, Location	Contemporary British Publications – St Pancras, London
Start date/timeframe	Any time from April/May 2019
Duration	3 months (or part-time equivalent). For a part-time placement, the student would be required to spend a minimum of 3 days/week on site at the Library.
Remote-working	If required, the placement could be undertaken working from home for 3 days per week (or part-time equivalent).
Context for placement	
<p>This PhD research placement will be based in the Contemporary British Publications team, which deals with several forms of digital publication including maps, web archive and emerging formats like apps and databases.</p> <p>The focus of the placement will be on born-digital maps published without geospatial data i.e. ‘flat’ images. The library currently obtains these maps via several legal deposit channels including the web archive, e-publications (e-books/e-journals etc) and digital maps.</p> <p>To date, the Library’s research effort has focused exclusively on maps with geospatial data, meaning our knowledge of maps as images needs to be improved.</p> <p>We are interested in the placement researching our holdings of this material, examining current publishing practices and evaluating the potential for readers to access this exciting new area of content. Depending on their interests, the student could address some or all of these areas. They would also be able to focus on maps from a thematic area of their choice such as environmental, transport or commercial, although the placement outcomes would be more broadly applicable.</p>	
Expected tasks and outcomes	
<p>The placement will be divided into three areas of work:</p> <p>Publishing The placement will conduct research to understand the extent of the publication of digital maps as images. The work will be conducted on the web and possibly at external events. The student will be asked to present their findings via a spreadsheet of publishers with estimations of content created and value.</p> <p>Holdings The placement will examine maps held in the web archive, and within our current holdings of e-publications and born-digital maps. The output will be a report on the volume, diversity and research value of maps in the three areas with examples.</p> <p>Access The placement will examine the library’s maps, web archive and e-publications (Ericom) viewers and their potential for displaying maps. The placement could also investigate users’ experiences of the digital maps viewer. Based on their research, the student will be asked to write a report listing reader requirements and evaluating the suitability of web archive and e-publications viewers for maps.</p> <p>Throughout the placement, the student will also be able to share their findings with the wider public via posts on BL blogs.</p>	
Training and experience expected to be gained by student through the placement	
At the beginning of the placement, the student will receive an introduction to the Library’s collections of digital maps, web archive, e-publications and metadata standards. Technical training	

will be provided by the supervisor as needed and, depending on the timing of the placement, the student will be able to attend the regular Digital Scholarship training courses offered at the Library.

The student will be part of the Contemporary British publications team and will be able to attend team meetings and take part in other relevant team activities. As the placement deals with diverse content they will also work with several British Library staff members. This will provide opportunities for networking that may be beneficial to both the student's current research and future career plans.

In terms of specialist knowledge, the placement will offer development in two areas: library practice and mapping.

In terms of library practice, the placement will provide:

- An understanding of how libraries obtain deposits and liaise with publishers.
- An introduction to the library's varied digital holdings, their discovery and access.
- Skills in assessing user experience through interaction with viewers.

This experience would offer professional development suitable to library, cultural heritage or web employment, which might not be available through doctoral study.

In terms of mapping, the placement will provide:

- An understanding of published geospatial data such as types, file formats, projections etc.
- A familiarity with viewing considerations for digital maps.
- Experience of how maps might be applied to a broad range of research areas.

The placement will offer experience in the use of digital maps and geospatial data beyond the doctoral student's own research, dealing with commercial, industry and broader research areas.

Required knowledge and skills

- Knowledge of one or more geospatial technologies such as GIS, web maps, linked data
- Some experience of digital research techniques such as web user experience survey, interview design, analytics interpretation, quantitative data evaluation, visualisation
- Relevant research background, e.g. in geography, economics, cartography, digital humanities or similar

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 in advance and, as part of their process, consult their HEI to ascertain what funding is available to support them.

Application deadline: 5pm on Monday, **18 February 2019**. Information on how to apply is available on our website: <https://www.bl.uk/news/2019/january/phd-research-placements-2019>