

Imprimerie Royale Proofs 1640-1789

Reference: 2025-WH-IRP

Supervisor(s)	Felicity Myrone, Lead Curator Western Heritage Prints and Drawings with Sophie Defrance, Curator, Romance Collections
Team(s) and department(s)	Printed Heritage and European Printed Heritage
Start date/timeframe	Earliest start: June 2025 Latest end date: March 2026
Duration	Three months (or part-time equivalent)
Part time/Full time	<input type="checkbox"/> Full time only <input type="checkbox"/> Part time only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Full time or part time Minimum 2.5 days a week if part time
Location/Working arrangements	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Can only be offered on site at St Pancras The project involves rare materials which can only be consulted at the Library under controlled conditions.
Application deadline	Friday 21 February 2025, 17.00 GMT

Eligibility criteria, funding information and details of how to apply are available on the British Library website: [Research collaboration - The British Library](#)

Context and nature of placement project

In 1853 the British Museum purchased seven large print albums. Held at shelfmark 1750.c.7, the set was described in E.C. Bigmore, *A bibliography of printing*, 1880, as an “immense book... containing proofs of all the copperplates belonging to the French Royal Printing-office for upwards of 104 years [sic, should read 140]. They include 3,031 examples. All the plates are mounted on white paper; and opposite to them is written the title of book for which they were executed, its form, and the year in which it was printed. Beneath the respective plates there is placed, whenever possible, the name of the engraver. Many of the plates served for different works; but they are given under the title of that in which they first appeared.”

This placement will revisit and re-evaluate the albums, assessing their condition, purpose and contents, and enhancing their current cataloguing. Some prints are listed in the albums as ‘manque’, there are many blank sheets, the volumes have suffered fire and water damage probably during World War Two, and they have been rebound (1949). The student will carry out a full survey of the albums and aim to create a brief individual record for each print listed in a project-specific spreadsheet. If time permits, they will also call up our complete copies of the books listed (many are held in the King’s Library) and compare and similarly catalogue their prints.

The British Library holds the nation’s largest collection of prints and drawings. This placement will be supervised by Felicity Myrone, the curator responsible for those in the Library’s Western Heritage collections, alongside Sophie DeFrance, who curates the Library’s French collections. They will provide training in object handling and cataloguing and will check translations.

Tasks and outcomes

The primary focus of the placement will be to

- physically examine the volumes
- ascertain that all listed are present
- foliate the insertions
- record information which can be used to enhance their discoverability on ‘Explore the British Library’
- we would also encourage the student to engage in supervised social media activity reflecting their discoveries. They could, for example, write blogs for Untold Lives.

Typical tasks will include

- examining the works and counting and numbering the plates
- recording how they are listed (by title and engraver) in an Excel spreadsheet and adding descriptions, subject and name authorities, mediums, dates etc
- comparing the proofs with other examples of the same prints at the Library, adapting the print level descriptions for those copies

Optional tasks, depending on the student’s interests, may include

- conducting archival research on the prints and their provenance
- contacting colleagues at the Bibliothèque nationale de France for advice

Training and development opportunities

PhD placement students are welcome to access a wide range of workshops, talks and training available at the Library. Supervisors will offer advice on which opportunities may be of particular relevance. Depending on availability, these wider training opportunities may include, for example, the Digital Scholarship Training Programme, Cultural Property Training, Research Roundtables, Business & IP Centre workshops and staff talks.

In addition, this particular PhD placement will provide the following opportunities:

- applying research skills for a practical purpose that supports the needs of a national library
- transcribing an unpublished manuscript
- handling collection items
- identifying and describing a wide range of prints and dating from the 17th to the 18th centuries
- developing knowledge of historic prints, print collecting and the history of the Library collections
- creating and enriching MARC catalogue records via an Excel spreadsheet
- taking part in daily curatorial life at the Library, attending staff meetings, training courses etc. as appropriate
- writing for a broad public audience
- using social media to engage audiences in research

Required knowledge and skills

All applicants will be expected to demonstrate the following:

- Ability to communicate effectively verbally and in writing, internally and externally
- Working knowledge of Microsoft Office applications and online meeting tools
- Ability to follow instructions and policies, in particular with regard to Health & Safety and the safe use of collections
- Ability to work effectively with others while also completing tasks independently
- Clear reasons for applying to a specific placement and good understanding of the project purpose

In addition, this specific placement project requires the following:

- Excel skills and an interest in collections-based research.
- A good reading knowledge of French is essential.
- The ability to read 18th century handwriting is essential.
- A demonstrated interest in print history, visual art and collecting history would be advantageous, but not essential.