

North American Migrant Narratives

Reference: 2018-15-FUE

Supervisor	Dr Francisca Fuentes, Curator North American Collections
Department, Location	European & American Studies / The Eccles Centre for American Studies, St Pancras
Start date/timeframe	The placement can take place any time between May 2018 and April 2019. A mutually convenient start date can be agreed with the supervisor.
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 2 days/week on site at the Library.</i>
Remote-working	If required, the placement could be undertaken working from home for 2 days per week (or part-time equivalent).

Context for placement	
<p>The North American collection at the British Library covers holdings from the United States and Canada, from 1850 to the present day. The collections are vast, and broadly take in the social sciences and humanities. They include official government publications, memoirs, diaries, novels, poetry, graphic novels, pamphlets and ephemera, magazines and newspapers, artists' books, photographs and photobooks, and independently published and small press materials. The Americas team more broadly are also responsible for the Library's Caribbean and Latin American collections.</p> <p>This placement will be managed jointly with the Eccles Centre, which supports research on the Library's North American and Caribbean collections. The Eccles Centre regularly organises events and conferences, and hosts research aides and digital exhibitions on their website.</p> <p>The placement holder will take account of the Library's existing holdings of narratives of migration to the US or Canada post-1850 in the North American collections (in an area to be defined by the applicant); evaluate historic and/ or contemporary publishing trends related to this; and report back on holdings and any gaps that need to be accounted for.</p> <p>We are particularly interested in applications that can speak to one of the following areas: East Asian, South Asian, Middle-Eastern, African, or Caribbean migrations to the US and/or Canada. We appreciate that in some instances, the trajectory of migration narratives may be more complex and this will be taken into consideration (e.g. formerly indentured servants arriving in the US or Canada via the Caribbean). However, it should be remembered that our primary collections focus is material published in the US or Canada post-1850.</p> <p>While secondary resources in our holdings can inform the direction of work, the focus of this placement is intended to be on primary resources such as those listed above. The specific topic/geographical areas of focus and genre(s) will be agreed in discussion with the British Library supervisor, but we would expect the student to input significantly on this and to have done preparatory research on our collections holdings before applying. It should be noted that an absence of materials in our holdings is also of interest to us, and would not automatically disqualify a topic.</p>	
Expected tasks and outcomes	
<p>The research placement student will survey the Library's collections relating to a specific area of North American migration history. They will compile a database of relevant materials within the Library's holdings, and produce a short report. The report will identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - collection strengths and gaps - publishers and materials that would complement holdings - digital humanities projects being undertaken in the area, and key websites and social media accounts <p>The report will inform future collection practice, strengthen curatorial knowledge in the area, and contribute to the development of a proposal for a potential future British Library exhibition. Findings of the research will</p>	

be presented to British Library curators in a staff forum, and to the general public in a lunchtime talk.

The successful applicant will contribute blog posts to the British Library's [Americas blog](#) and Twitter account (@BL_Americas). Depending on the timing of the placement and subject to consultation with the BL supervisor and other stakeholders, the student might additionally have the opportunity to lead on a project with the Eccles Centre – for example a related event or symposium, or a web-based research guide.

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

The student will gain an insight into a world-class research Library, its content, structure, and remit. They will receive an introduction to the wider BL collections structure and to the North American collection, and have access to relevant BL training courses. Depending on the date of the placement, these could include the following: introduction to our cataloguing system (Aleph); digital scholarship; cultural heritage and due diligence; copyright and intellectual property; and writing for social media. In addition to working closely with the supervisor, the student will have the opportunity to shadow other members of staff working in relevant areas (e.g. the Eccles Centre's bibliographic editor; the monographs processing team at Boston Spa).

Placement holders will gain a better understanding of the Library's collections practices. They will acquire specific knowledge about an aspect of the historic and/or contemporary publishing industry in the US/Canada and will gain direct experience of reporting, communicating research, and informing strategy in the cultural sector. They will also gain enhanced access to British Library collections beyond what they would receive via a Reader Pass.

By contributing to the BL Americas blog, they will also have the opportunity to develop their writing skills and gain experience in communicating research to broader, largely non-academic audiences. Finally, they would be encouraged to submit an article based on their research to the [Electronic British Library Journal](#) (eBLJ).

Required knowledge and skills

- Postgraduate level understanding of American/Canadian cultural history, and/or American/Canadian literature. Specific knowledge of North American migration histories is not a pre-requisite, but a broad awareness of and interest in the context and issues related to these would be beneficial.
- Ability to exercise sensitivity towards the materials and topic.
- As stated above, we would expect the student to input significantly into the specific focus of the placement and to have done preparatory research on our collections holdings before applying.

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.