

## Analysing topographical image making c. 1600-1824

Reference: 2019-6-MYR

<b>Supervisor</b>	Felicity Myrone, Lead Curator Western Prints and Drawings
<b>Department, Location</b>	Western Heritage Collections - St Pancras, London
<b>Start date/timeframe</b>	Flexible but we would prefer to hold this placement at some point during the period May 2019 – October 2019
<b>Duration</b>	<b>3 months</b> (or part-time equivalent). The placement would need to be undertaken on a full-time basis initially. However, there would be scope for the placement to be done on a part-time basis after a period of full time training
<b>Remote-working</b>	After an initial period of full-time office-based training, there is the potential for the placement student to work from home for 1-2 days a week, if required.
<b>Context for placement</b>	
<p>This placement will be based in the in the Printed Heritage section of the Western Heritage Collections department. It will be supervised by the Lead Curator of Western Prints and Drawings.</p> <p>The British Library's prints and drawings collections as a whole are vast, far outnumbering the holdings at the British Museum. But they are largely unknown, primarily due to their relative inaccessibility. Addressing this problem is a huge task. It involves not only the documentation of vast quantities of images which have historically been overlooked, but also tackling questions of value and classification. It is precisely this which lies at the heart of the major cataloguing project for prints and drawings at the British Library which is now nearing completion. We have been cataloguing George III's very diverse and extensive King's Topographical Collection since 2013, and would like to invite a PhD researcher to help analyse the newly created data, and enrich it further.</p> <p>The prints and drawings in George III's topographical collection (K.Top) date from the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and are worldwide in coverage. It includes bound book illustrations and single sheet prints and drawings mounted into large albums, all previously categorised as maps and with little or no detail regarding their format, genre, subject matter, creators, purpose and provenance.</p> <p>We have now photographed the works and created data for each item. The placement project would be to explore and analyse this data at a macro level, mining it for historical information and helping the Library deepen its understanding of this important collection. The project would be particularly suitable for a student with a focus on book history, the history of collecting, cultural and social history, or art history and/or with a special interest in digital humanities, historical statistics, data analysis and visualisation and/or GIS.</p> <p>See <a href="#">our catalogue</a> for an indication of the records available. For background information on the collection, see the following articles on the Picturing Places website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.bl.uk/picturing-places/articles/prints-and-drawings-at-the-british-museum-and-british-library">https://www.bl.uk/picturing-places/articles/prints-and-drawings-at-the-british-museum-and-british-library</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.bl.uk/picturing-places/articles/what-is-ktop">https://www.bl.uk/picturing-places/articles/what-is-ktop</a></li> </ul>	
<b>Expected tasks and outcomes</b>	
<p>Looking at around 15,000 records which will be downloaded from our catalogue, the project would seek to identify a larger historical pattern or tendency. There are many possible avenues to pursue, and the student would be free to define their approach after consultation with members of the project team. Possibilities would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Topographical analysis: which sites are depicted and when, are there trends as places become accessible/popular/strategically important? The records include co-ordinates for place depicted – could you digitally map the views and compare place depicted with place of</li> </ul>	

publication to attempt analysis of how cultures were perceiving/presenting each other?

- Subject/genre analysis: which types of image and/or text feature (and why)? Does this change over time? We describe each image in a free-text field and note the genre, subject matter and staffage - could you map or timeline their changing popularity?
- Which artists, engravers, authors, collectors, publishers and binders are involved; how female, military or local and native artists are represented.
- Mapping publishers/makers: where works were created, including which local and private presses feature. Are there are dominant publishers/hubs of topographical printing activity?
- Advertisements, dedications, subscribers, previous owners: who were the expected and actual audience/s? We record marks of ownership, how do these enrich our understanding of print collecting in the period? We note how works entered George III's collection – perhaps inherited, as gifts or as purchases – could one build a timeline to trace when the collection was formed?
- Text and image: the influence of text on perception of an image's meaning and purpose. Where our cataloguers were able, they have noted when a single print is part of a series or a disbound illustration to a book – can you spot missing links? Which descriptions would have originally accompanied plates? We also note how each item has been described in previous catalogues (from 1829 and 1844) – what does an analysis of these records reveal about changing curatorial practices and (art) historical concerns?

The PhD placement student will analyse the catalogue records for prints and drawings from George III's Topographical Collection, and present their findings in a range of formats according to the projects chosen to pursue.

Outputs could include giving a lunchtime talk or organising a study day and will involve at least one 1-2,000 word article on their findings for the Library's [Picturing Places](#) website and contributing to the [Untold Lives](#) blog.

Specific outputs along these lines will be discussed and agreed with the BL supervisor at the start of the project.

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

The British Library supervisor is leading a temporary specialist project team cataloguing George III's maps and views, and the placement student would work alongside this team and with the guidance of colleagues from the Library's Metadata Services and Digital Scholarship teams.

The placement student would be encouraged to attend relevant training sessions and meet and potentially work-shadow colleagues in Digitisation, Printed Heritage, Western Heritage and Culture and Learning, gaining understanding of how our collections are being made more accessible through current cataloguing, digitisation and display projects. In contributing the anticipated blog posts, they will receive support and feedback regarding the use of social media tools and the development of writing skills, in accordance with departmental guidelines and practice.

More broadly, the placement offers an opportunity to gain experience of:

- applying research skills for a practical purpose that supports the needs of a national library
- taking part in daily curatorial life at the Library, attending staff meetings, training courses etc. as appropriate
- writing for a broad public audience

The student would also benefit from opportunities to participate in team meetings, meet with colleagues in other parts of the Library (including other PhD students), and take advantage of more generic staff training opportunities available during the placement, for example the Library's in-house Digital Scholarship Training Programme and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Curators series of lunchtime talks.

#### **Required knowledge and skills**

The placement would suit a student with Excel skills and an interest in collections-based research, data analysis and visualisation and the digital humanities. A demonstrated interest in art history and a reading knowledge of at least one European language other than English would be advantageous but not essential.

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>