

# Interrogating German Collections at the British Library

Reference: 2021-EA-German

<b>Supervisor (name &amp; role)</b>	Dr Pardaad Chamsaz (Curator Germanic Collections) Susan Reed (Lead Curator Germanic Collections) Dr Nicola Thomas (Expanding German Studies Collective, external advisor)
<b>Department &amp; Site</b>	European & American Collections, London (St Pancras)
<b>Start date/Timeframe</b>	Anytime from May 2021 onwards, but to be completed by March 2022 (exact start date to be agreed with the supervisor)
<b>Duration</b>	<b>3 months</b> or part-time equivalent Ideally the student should spend at least 1 day/week on site (or per fortnight if part-time), but the project can work around the student's requirements.
<b>Suitability for remote working</b>	This project could mostly be undertaken remotely, but the student would ideally regularly consult materials and data on site. To be discussed with the supervisors.

## Context for placement

The British Library's [German Printed Collections](#) are of worldwide importance and will serve as a comprehensive source for this placement to interrogate the conventional history of knowledge of German-speaking regions, and to locate under-represented perspectives. To be custodians of and to fairly represent that knowledge demands constant interrogation and revision.

The placement will be supervised in collaboration with the [Expanding German Studies](#) (EGS) initiative. EGS highlight that 'while the legacies of colonialism and empire resonate differently in German-language literary and cultural studies compared to in the Anglosphere', German Studies curricula 'are just as in need of opening up to subaltern and marginalised voices.' There is a need to understand how German culture has constructed categories of racial difference, and how the voices of those construed as racialised others (including Jewish, Eastern European, Black, East Asian, Turkish and Middle Eastern people) have been represented within the discipline. The specific contours of the German colonial and imperial projects from Eastern Pomerania to West Africa have also contributed to shaping German Studies within the UK.

Areas of focus could include, but are not limited to:

1. How voices marginalised by racist discourses are represented in the German collections;
2. What the German collections reveal about how colonialism and imperialism within and beyond Europe have shaped the discipline of German Studies in the UK, across a broad time span;
3. The history of the acquisition and curation of German collections at the BL, and the implications of links with institutions/booksellers/researchers in German-speaking regions on collection building and use.

### Expected tasks and outcomes

While the student will be expected to propose a specific focus, the placement will involve a combination and selection of the tasks listed below:

- Create lists of gaps in the collections based on the student's area of focus and research how those gaps could be filled through acquisition or connection to external digitised content;
- Write blog posts on relevant collection items, but also on methodology and approach to collections and curation in the context of opening up knowledge to marginalised voices;
- Research the dominant structures of knowledge represented comprehensively in the German collections, in the absence of neglected voices, to critically engage with how German national culture was presented abroad;
- Improve catalogue records and correct outdated and insensitive metadata and descriptions;
- Give a presentation on the project to the host department and other stakeholders.

In collaboration with *Expanding German Studies*:

- Co-develop teaching resources and collaborative workshops/modules using BL collection items;
- Recommend digitisation of relevant items for the above;
- Identify and translate (for the benefit of first- and second-year German undergraduates) viable out-of-copyright German works, which have been neglected and their authors under-represented.

### Training and development opportunities

All placement students are welcome to access the Library's offer of workshops, talks and training. For further details please refer to the [Application Guidelines on the British Library website](#).

In addition, this placement project offers an opportunity for a PhD student to put their research and critical thinking skills into practice at a major cultural institution through a topic that will be crucial to every aspect of the Library and to the cultural sector more widely in the coming years.

In particular, the student will

- receive a hands-on introduction to key aspects of curation, collection management and practice-based research;
- manage a short-term project with regular and defined outcomes;
- learn to liaise with different audiences and stakeholders within and outside the institution, through meetings, presentations, blogs, and other publications.

In shaping and undertaking the placement project, the student will benefit from the support and expertise of an expert team of supervisors both at the Library and *Expanding German Studies*. If of interest, teaching experience with *Expanding German Studies* could form a part of the placement.

### Required knowledge and skills

Please ensure that you are aware of the general expectations for all applicants, as detailed in the [Application Guidelines on the British Library website](#).

For this specific project, the following additional criteria apply:

- A very good reading knowledge of German is essential for this project.
- Given the nature of the collections in focus, degree-level knowledge of German language and literature is highly desirable.

Application deadline: 5pm on Friday **18 December 2020**

Further information on eligibility, conditions and how to apply is available on the British Library website: <https://www.bl.uk/news/2020/october/phd-placement-adverts-2020>