

Public and academic libraries: Current and future collaborations

Reference: 2022-CE-SDP

Supervisor(s)	Becca Mytton (Single Digital Presence Project Officer)
Team and department	Everyone Engaged, Public Libraries & Community Engagement
Start date/timeframe	Earliest start: June 2022 Latest end date: March 2023
Duration	3 months (or part-time equivalent)
Part time/Full time	Full time or part time Minimum days/week if undertaken part time: 2
Location and working arrangements	Can be offered as a fully remote placement Can be offered as hybrid placement (remote with some visits to London St Pancras)

Context and nature of placement project

In June 2021, the British Library [received funding from Arts Council England](#) to continue its work on the 'Single Digital Presence' (SDP) project for public libraries. The majority of the funding will go towards building a national digital platform for public libraries in the UK. Its development will be iterative, and whilst we work towards the initial launch of the platform, we are continuing to research how its features and role may evolve in the future.

One area of consideration is how the platform may extend to other types of libraries, particularly academic libraries. Public and higher education libraries around the UK collaborate in a variety of valuable ways but, as explained in a [2018 ACE report](#) on this topic, there are a number of factors which limit their ability to establish and make the most of these relationships. The report noted that a future SDP platform has the potential to support partnerships between public libraries and higher education institutions.

This placement will explore that potential. The student will investigate the relationships that currently exist between academic and public libraries and identify how the forthcoming SDP platform could support collaboration between them in the future.

The student will be supervised by the SDP Project Officer through regular meetings, and will also be integrated into the wider SDP team which is hosted within the Everyone Engaged department. They will be given an induction in the first week, which will include a presentation outlining the project's aims and status (this will vary depending on when the placement begins) and introduction to the Library's wider work with public libraries.

Please note that by the time the placement takes place, the SDP platform will have a new name and, depending on start date, may be publicly accessible online as a beta website for testing.

Tasks and outcomes

The primary focus of this placement will be to research the relationship between public and academic libraries in the UK and consider how these collaborations can be supported and improved in future via a new unified space for public libraries online.

The main tasks will include:

- Desktop research into the relationship between public and academic libraries in the UK, ranging from small-scale strategic collaborations to long term infrastructural partnerships.
- A review of existing SDP research reports.
- An exploration of international examples of good practice, in terms of both individual partnerships and wider national frameworks that facilitate collaboration.
- Consultation with relevant stakeholders in the library sector (the supervisor will help to identify both internal and external contacts).
- Liaising as necessary with external stakeholders prior to any wider sharing of research outcomes.

The primary outcome will be a report outlining the student's findings and giving tangible recommendations for next steps. Additional outcomes may include:

- A blog post on the British Library's website.
- An internal presentation to relevant staff members.
- Presentations to external stakeholders.

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 opportunities to:

- Help inform and shape the strategic development of the British Library's work with public libraries.
- Become familiar with and contribute to the development of a nationally significant digital transformation project.
- Apply research skills to a significant library sector intervention.
- Network with a range of library sector stakeholders.
- Attend relevant events, e.g. talks and conferences.

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.

There are no additional requirements for this specific placement, but it would suit a student with an interest in and understanding of UK public libraries.

Application deadline: **Friday 25 February 2022 (5pm)**

Eligibility criteria, funding information and details of how to apply are available on the British Library website: <https://www.bl.uk/research-collaboration/doctoral-research/british-library-phd-placement-scheme>