

John Evelyn's Miscellaneous Correspondence: Making Connections

Reference: 2022-WH-EVE

Supervisor(s)	Alex Hailey (Curator, Modern Archives and Mss) Alexandra Ault (Lead Curator, Modern Archives and Mss)
Team and department	Modern Archives and Manuscripts 1600–1950, Western Heritage Collections
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: 2.5
Location and working arrangements	Can only be offered on site at London, St Pancras A small amount of research could be undertaken remotely, but the majority of the work is expected to be completed on site Some mitigations could be made in event of further lockdowns, e.g. working from digitised copies

Context and nature of placement project

The Modern Archives and Manuscripts team is responsible for western archive and manuscript collections dating from 1601 to 1950, including historical, literary and scientific collections. The papers of John Evelyn (1620–1706) and his family are of one of the treasures in this collection. Evelyn is regarded as one of the great chroniclers of the seventeenth century, and his extensive collection includes his diary, papers related to his family estate, historical documents, and a voluminous correspondence.

This project focuses on five volumes of Evelyn's inbound letters, which have never been fully catalogued. Dating from 1637–1705, the letters cover a wide range of subjects and come from correspondents across Europe and the UK, representing a broad cross-section of society – petitions from local parishioners and itineraries from Italian housekeepers are found alongside letters from architect Christopher Wren, sculptor Grinling Gibbons, and the polymath and key Commonwealth figure Samuel Hartlib. Evelyn's annotations can be found on many of the letters, which also feature a wide variety of seals, postmarks and letter locking marks. Full descriptive cataloguing of these letters is a crucial step in making the Evelyn archive more accessible, and will support a wide range of research into seventeenth century studies, Evelyn and his wide intellectual circle.

In addition to cataloguing, the student will have the opportunity to identify one aspect of the letters – such as a person, event, place or subject – and explore this topic within the context of the wider Evelyn papers. This research could lead to enhanced catalogue entries for other parts of the collection, links between descriptive records, blog posts, or suggestions for further research.

The placement will be supervised by curators Alex Hailey and Alexandra Ault, who will provide an introduction to the work of the modern archives team, training in cataloguing and use of the Library's systems, and weekly meetings to monitor progress and identify any further training needs.

Tasks and outcomes

The primary focus of this placement will be to:

- Catalogue five volumes of Evelyn's letters, creating descriptions for each letter, to be presented in the Library's Explore Archives and Manuscripts catalogue.
- Create or link to authority records for the authors of each letter.

Additionally, the candidate will identify one aspect of the letters and explore this within the wider Evelyn papers and in the context of his life and work.

The main outcomes envisaged for this placement are:

- Detailed catalogue entries for 5 volumes.
- Linked authority records for each letter.
- An expression of the research into one aspect of the Evelyn papers, which could take the form of, for example, a blog post, enhanced catalogue entries, a series of tweets.

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:

- Training in cataloguing and authority control, and the application of international standards ISAD(G) and ISAAR(CPF).
- Archive handling skills.
- Training in use of the Library's archive cataloguing system.
- An introduction to the wider work of the modern archives and manuscripts team.
- Obtain valuable insight into day-to-day operations of a major national library, research organisation and cultural hub, highlighting potential future career paths.

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:

- Good knowledge of seventeenth-eighteenth century history (essential).
- Ability to read seventeenth-eighteenth century handwriting (essential).

Working knowledge of Latin and one or more European language (desirable).

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

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>