Collecting complex digital publications:
Testing an enhanced curation method

Reference: **2022-CB-EF**

Supervisor(s)	Giulia Carla Rossi (Curator, Digital Publications)
Team and department	Contemporary British Published Collections, Collections and Curation department
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 fully remote placement (ideally with some initial in-person training) Can be offered as hybrid placement (remote with some visits)

Context and nature of placement project

In 2017, the six UK Legal Deposit Libraries set up the 'Emerging Formats Project' in order to build their knowledge and capability to collect new media and complex digital publications. For the purpose of this work, emerging formats are defined as born-digital interactive publications whose format types might be non-standard and often require bespoke collection approaches. Examples of this are the curated collections in the UK Web Archive about Interactive Narratives and the New Media Writing Prize. There are multiple challenges related to collecting, preserving and providing access to emerging formats: the collection and creation of contextual information is one approach to fill in the gaps and enhance curation. Contextual information is defined as all supporting material that do not constitute the publication, but can be used to supplement it and enrich the research experience. It helps further understanding of what a work is, the context of its publication, its composition and working, as well as the author's original intent. Contextual information might include - but is not limited to - webpages, interviews with the author, reviews, blog posts, screenshots/screencast of usage of a work.

This placement will help the Library test a collection matrix for contextual information relating to emerging formats, using different collecting methods – including web archiving, direct collaboration with the author/publisher of a work and the creation of supporting material such as screenshots, interviews, and video recordings. This will be a great opportunity to develop contemporary collection of complex digital publications and document innovative use of technology in the UK publishing field. It will also enable collection and preservation of works that the Library could not support in their original format.

The placement will focus on one of three emerging formats case studies, as part of a wider project on contextual information and enhanced curation by the Legal Deposit Libraries' 'Emerging Formats' group. The student will receive training in web archiving, with an overview of different web crawling tools and The British Library Annotation and Curation Tool (ACT). This placement will also provide the student with an opportunity to participate in a network of cultural heritage institutions concerned with the preservation of digital publications and create contacts with authors and publishers in the digital writing community.

Tasks and outcomes

The primary focus of this placement will be to work on a collection of contextual information around an emerging format publication. This will include descriptive and contextual material collected and/or created by the student, in order to enhance, complement and clarify the original context of a born-digital interactive publication in our collection.

Typical tasks will include:

- Researching approaches taken by other collecting initiatives and institutions in regard to contextual information collecting and enhanced curation.
- Becoming familiar with different types of contextual material and testing out different collecting methods.
- Working with colleagues in Emerging Formats and the Legal Deposit Libraries Emerging Formats Subgroup to select material to include in the contextual information collection.
- Liaising with colleagues in Contemporary British Published Collections and the wider Contemporary British Collections department.
- Documenting the process (to end in a final report).

Optional tasks, depending on the student's areas of interest, may include:

- Exploring options for linking contextual information together and to the publication itself in order to enable discovery.
- Writing blog posts to document the placement on one of the British Library blogs.

The main outcomes envisaged for this placement are:

- A collection of contextual information related to one emerging format publication, curated by the student: this will include different types of material (e.g. reviews, interviews, unpublished material, videos, images) collected using different methods, as well as created by the student themselves. The student will be able to choose the publication among a few pre-selected options, including apps, digital interactive narratives, and other born-digital publications.
- A case study report on creating the collection, including recommendations to support further collecting.
- Contribution to the British Library Emerging Formats project page.
- Contribution to a project report and documentation.
- One staff talk about the project.

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:

- Introduction to web archiving, with an overview of different web crawling tools and The British Library Annotation and Curation tool (ACT).
- Introduction to digital collections management and preservation and the British Library's Emerging Formats work in the context of Non-Print Legal Deposit.
- Participation in weekly Contemporary British Published Collection team meetings and monthly Contemporary British Collections departmental meetings.

Training and development opportunities

- Collaboration with other PhD Placement students – of particular interest might be the work of the other student undertaking a placement on Enhanced Curation for the Library's Contemporary Archives and Manuscripts team (subject to dates agreed with students appointed to each placement).
- Participation in meetings of the Collection Development and Acquisition Subgroup for Emerging Formats with representatives from the other five UK Legal Deposit Libraries.
- Participation in the Complex Digital Objects Group which brings together colleagues in other collecting institutions interested in researching digital preservation.

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:

- Basic knowledge of media editing tools for photographs, video and audio (essential).
- An interest in archival practices and GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums) collecting with a focus on digital publications (essential).
- An interest in digital storytelling, emerging formats or digital preservation (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