

Investigating small publisher fairs across the UK to support collection development for artists' books and fine press

Reference: 2022-CB-ART

Supervisor(s)	Jerry Jenkins (Curator, Contemporary British Publications)
Team and department	Contemporary British Publications, Collections and Curation
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 Can be offered as hybrid placement (remote with visits to London St Pancras)

Context and nature of placement project

The placement will be located in the Contemporary British Publications team which is responsible for curation of 21st century UK publishing across print and digital formats. The team brings together curators with responsibility for print and electronic publications, digital mapping, the UK Web Archive, and emerging formats. Contemporary British Collections is one of four curatorial areas with responsibility for developing and maintaining our collections, promoting them, and helping our users to access them.

The PhD placement student will use information made available by regional small publisher book fairs across the UK to help us assess how well our current collecting represents the diversity of creators and publishers in the UK who exhibit through these book fairs. The work will focus on self-published items, fine press, and artists' books. We are interested in exploring the overlap of participants at fairs and events held in different parts of the UK. We hope that by comparing exhibitor lists from different regional book fairs with our holdings, we can gain a better understanding of how place of publication or distribution impacts on acquisition, and which publishers are submitting their work under legal deposit.

The student will be supervised by Jerry Jenkins, Curator for Contemporary British Publications and will also be supported by Laurence Byrne, Curator for Printed Heritage post-1901. Jerry's role includes the selection and promotion of contemporary artist's books: he is Chair of ARLIS (UK & Ireland Art Libraries Society) and he has previously organised a series of events in the Libraries called Artists Books Now. He will be available either onsite or remotely to arrange the student's induction and to guide their work through regular meetings. There are two other members of the publications team who have an interest in this work and can offer support if needed.

Tasks and outcomes

The placement will focus on identifying UK-based publishers from the online exhibitor lists of a number of regionally based small publisher book fairs. A list of book fairs can be found at: <http://smallpublishersfair.co.uk/other-small-press-publisher-events/>

Typical tasks will include:

- Looking at works online to assess whether they would be in scope for acquisition (guidance will be given).
- Assessing and gathering information about publishers / artists / creators.
- Checking Library catalogues to find out whether the publications identified have come into the Library through legal deposit or by purchase (guidance will be given).
- Creating, populating, and analysing a spreadsheet of the exhibitors at different regional fairs.

Additional optional activities may include:

- Development of a collection within the [UK Web Archive](#) focused on artists' books, fine press and independently published works.
- Subject to funds available and the student's interest, to attend or present to the ARLIS conference and/or to attend another relevant UK event during the placement.

Main outcomes:

- A spreadsheet that allows for comparison of the exhibitors at different regional fairs, and which can be used for analysis to ensure our intake is representative of both regional diversity and the ethnic diversity of creators where this is apparent from descriptions, images or biographies made available online.
- A short report summarising key learning and recommendations from the analysis.

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 provides opportunities to:

- Learn about research in policy development at a large cultural institution and the challenges of building representative collections.
- Learn about the Library's collection of contemporary fine press and artists' books working alongside the curator with specialist knowledge of our collection and collecting practice.
- Work independently to compile and structure relevant information and to make recommendations based on their research will help shape Library policy.
- Gain a detailed understanding of how book artists connect with an audience and market their work.
- Contribute to the UK Web Archive by identifying and archiving websites of book fairs and book artists, fine presses and independent publishers.
- Write one or more blog posts about the work, depending on the student's interest.

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:

- Some prior knowledge of the production and distribution of artists books or fine press publishing (but in-depth, specialist knowledge is not expected).
- Research interest related to publishing generally or independent publishing, fine press or artists' books particularly, or comparable experience of work in publishing or independent publishing.
- Ability to compile and work with a large spreadsheet.

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>