

Mapping Caribbean Diasporic Networks through Correspondence

Reference: 2022-ACQ-CDN

Supervisor(s)	Eleanor Casson (Curator, Contemporary Politics and Public Life) Stella Wisdom (Digital Curator for Contemporary British Collections)
Team and department	Contemporary Literary and Creative Archives Team, Contemporary Archival and MSS Collection
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 days
Location and working arrangements	Can only be offered on site at London (St Pancras) Desk space will be provided in the Contemporary Archives team office

Context and nature of placement project

This is an exciting opportunity to be involved with the preliminary stages of a project to map the Caribbean Diasporic Network evident in the correspondence files of the Andrew Salkey Archive. This placement will be based in the Contemporary Literary and Creative Archives team at the British Library, with support from Digital Scholarship colleagues and external training on the Gephi platform.

The candidate will gain access to a selection of correspondence files to create an item level dataset and explore the content of letters from the likes of Kamau Brathwaite, C.L.R. James, and Samuel Selvon. The placement will result in a linked data set and visual representation of the network, associating individuals with each other and mapping their movement across the world between the 1950s and 1990s.

This placement will offer the successful candidate the opportunity to develop their specialist knowledge through access to the extensive correspondence series in the Andrew Salkey archive, and to undertake practical research in a curatorial context by improving the accessibility of the linked metadata for this collection material. This project is a vital building block in improving the Library's engagement with this material and exploring the ways this material can be accessed by a wider audience.

The placement will be supervised by the Curator for Contemporary Politics and Public Life, on a weekly basis with additional support from the Digital Curator for Contemporary British Collections. The candidate will receive an induction to working at the Library, attend departmental meetings, and have the opportunity to work with other curators in the team.

Tasks and outcomes

The primary focus of this placement will be to create a mapped visualisation of the Caribbean Diasporic Network evident in the correspondence files of the Andrew Salkey Archive.

Typical tasks will include:

- Create a linked dataset by inputting the metadata into a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet.
- Code into Gephi Open Graph Visualisation Platform and create a visualisation graph from the linked dataset creating 'nodes' for the correspondents and 'edges' for the connections between them and Andrew Salkey. Coding for this task will be necessary to create the visualisation.

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

- A scholarly contribution through a journal article about the project shaped to fit the candidates own research interests.

The main outcome envisaged for this placement is to develop an item level dataset of a sample of ten files, selected by the student and supervisor, of Andrew Salkey's 'Special Correspondence' files linking the data and mapping the correspondent's names, location they were writing from, and dates of the correspondence in a spreadsheet to input into the Gephi Open Graph Visualisation Platform.

Training and development opportunities

PhD placement students are welcome to access the 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:

- Practical Cataloguing Experience
 - Reading and handling archive material in multiple forms of correspondence.
 - Creating and curating linked data via a spreadsheet.
- Training in Coding for Gephi Open Graph Visualisation Platform
 - Experience of network analysis and coding to create graphs on the Gephi platform.
- Experience of working in a curatorial team
 - Collaborating with colleagues within different teams at the Library.
 - The opportunity to write a journal article about the project.
 - Weekly support from the lead supervisor to facilitate working with the archive and develop the project together.

Please do not be concerned if you do not have prior experience or expertise in data visualisation and cataloguing metadata, as training and support will be provided to develop these skills.

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:

- Excellent knowledge of the people and places involved in the Caribbean Diasporic Network (essential).
- Knowledge of Caribbean dialects including Jamaican Patois and Bajan Dialect (desirable).
- An understanding of and strong interest in working with metadata (desirable).
- High level of time-management skills (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>