

Pre-1900 Japanese-produced maps in the British Library

Reference: 2022-WH-MAP

Supervisor(s)	Tom Harper (Lead Curator of Antiquarian Mapping)
Team and department	Modern Archives and Manuscripts, Western Heritage Collections, Collections and Curation department
Start date/timeframe	Earliest start: June 2022 Latest end date: March 2023
Duration	3 months
Part time/Full time	Full time only
Location and working arrangements	Can only be offered on site in London, St Pancras

Context and nature of placement project

The British Library's collection of 350 pre-1900 Japanese-produced maps is one of the major holdings of such material outside of Japan. Catalogue records for the maps are available on ['Explore the British Library'](#), and the collection was digitised in 2019. Today the maps are split between two areas. The majority are held in the map collection (part of Western Heritage Collections), which contains over 4 million maps and global coverage of the period 1540 to 2021. A smaller number of maps are held in the Library's Japanese collections, a section of the Asian and African Department.

The project to promote the British Library's pre-1900 Japanese-produced maps follows the Library's commitment to make cultural heritage more accessible and widely available to existing and future users. The placement student will be supervised by the map curatorial team in the Library's Modern Archives and Manuscript section, and will also have regular contact with Japanese Collections curators from the Asian and African Department.

The student will improve the discoverability of these maps through three defined activities. Firstly, by adding English and Japanese translations and mathematical cartographic data, and improving terminology to conform with accepted standards. Secondly, by collecting key physical and cartographic information from the maps, such as dimensions and annotations, that have not previously been recorded. Finally, by researching and drafting a report on the Japanese-produced maps to form the basis of a future British Library online Collection Guide.

The student will receive an induction into the Library and the curatorial areas, as well as bespoke training sessions and regular meetings with map and Japanese collections curators. There will also be opportunities to engage with the Library's reference, storage, metadata and web teams, and more widely with other UK repositories of Japanese-produced maps as well as the academic community of map researchers.

Tasks and outcomes

The primary focus of this placement will be to improve the cataloguing metadata for the Japanese-produced maps, which will in turn improve their discoverability on 'Explore the British Library' and beyond.

Typical tasks will include:

- Adding original Japanese language titles and Japanese-English translations for the maps to an Excel spreadsheet.
- Assessing existing terminology used for the maps and making changes where appropriate.
- Using [Bounding Box](#) and other online tools to capture each map's geographical coordinates;
- Examining the maps and recording information not previously captured (such as dimensions or annotations) on a spreadsheet.
- Researching and drafting a report on the maps to form the basis of a future British Library online Collection Guide.

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

- Conducting some archival research on the history and acquisition of the maps.
- Working with the reference team in the Maps Reading Room to assess the open-access resources for Japanese maps.
- Working with the digital images of the collection.

The main outcomes envisaged for this placement are:

- More concise and discoverable cataloguing of the Library's Japanese-produced maps.
- An internal report on the maps to form the basis for an online Collection Guide.
- At least one post for the Library's [Maps and views blog](#) and/or [Asian and African studies blog](#).

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:

- Access and handling of early cartographic materials in a research library setting.
- Training in systems and processes used for maps, including cataloguing, geospatial data creation and the automated ordering system.
- An opportunity to develop written content for the British Library's website.
- Other development opportunities gained through close working with Modern Archives and Asian & African curatorial areas.

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:

- Ability to read and interpret Japanese script, including the traditional form of Chinese characters (essential).
- Familiarity with maps and geospatial data (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>