

Visiting Postdoctoral Research Fellowship in Sustainability and Environment

Context and nature of project

This is a collections-based fellowship, aimed at early career researchers in the arts and humanities or social sciences. It is designed to encourage the promotion and use of British Library collections in sustainability and environmental research, an expanding and urgent area of current social and cultural enquiry. This is a pilot scheme, designed to assist the Library to work in new ways to meet its environmental and sustainability goals, to showcase the rich potential of our collections in this area, and to help us to better understand the needs of users including broader research communities such as activists and creative practitioners.

Researchers are invited to propose any projects which explore collection areas relevant to sustainability and environment, which seek to connect shared histories and futures. We are particularly interested in projects which explore our historical collections, including but not limited to: science, law, politics, literature, stamps, newspapers, maps, poetry, weather reports, oral histories, and so on. We welcome a variety of proposed outputs resulting from this research, including but not limited to: journal articles, blog posts, podcasts, public talks or performances, community engagement activities, submission of research bids or other funding applications.

We are open to any form or focus of proposal, but are particularly excited for researchers to approach our collections through the following research themes:

- Development of environmentalism – eco-criticism; representations and experiences of climate crisis; climate activism; changing attitudes to the natural world; accessibility of environmental knowledge; sustainability and wellbeing; public engagement in science.
- How archive and library collections can be used to examine changing landscapes, waterways, climates and ecologies – including anthropogenic impacts, human-animal relations; human geography.
- Colonial and imperial environments – networks, institutions and communities; natural economies and commodity frontiers; scarcity and extraction; conflict, agency and social justice.
- Green Libraries – developing environmentally sustainable practices in archives and libraries; improving environmental conditions for historical collections; risk management including new and emerging risks from a changing climate; community engagement and learning practice/pedagogies.

Applicants are asked to make explicit their response to the Application Requirements outlined below and specifically the Library's published aim to open up the collection in new and interesting ways, to support work on solutions to the environmental challenges we face – from climate research to enabling sustainable business and enterprise, and engaging people through events, exhibitions and learning, to increasing climate literacy and the visibility of climate science.

Fellowship Guidelines

- Fellowship must commence before 01 March 2025;
- £8000 bursary to support 4 months full-time research (or part-time equivalent) at the Library, paid as lump sum;
- Part-time and flexible-working proposals are welcome and will be supported wherever possible;
- Up to £2000 additional funding available to support travel expenses across the Fellowship;
- Provision of staff pass, laptop, and desk space in Research Development office;
- Fellows must present their work at an internal staff talk and submit a written report of 1000 words upon completion of their project, detailing collections used, findings, outputs, planned future activities, and recommendations. This report will be uploaded to the Library's [Shared Research Repository](#). They may also be asked to create a blog based on their work to be shared through British Library channels;
- As the Fellowship is supported by a bursary payment, priority will be given to applicants who do not currently hold a full-time position at a Higher Education Institution, an Independent Research Organisation, or other institution;
- This Fellowship does not constitute an offer of temporary or permanent employment at The British Library. Fellows are responsible for their own tax and employment status, and for making any and all required declarations to HMRC or DWP.

Training and development opportunities

Visiting Postdoctoral Research Fellows are welcome to access the wide range of workshops, talks, training and expertise available at the Library.

The Research Development Team will support the Fellow in connecting with other members of Library staff and offer advice on which training opportunities may be of particular relevance. Depending on availability, these may include, for example, the Digital Scholarship Training Programme, Cultural Property Training, Researcher Packed Lunches, Carbon Literacy Training; Business & IP Centre workshops and staff talks.

The Fellow will be supported to produce a blog post, public lecture, community engagement activities, and so on, as desired.

Eligibility and Application Requirements

This scheme is explicitly designed to address the scarcity of funding available for postdoctoral researchers. It is open to all researchers within 10 years of their PhD, who are resident in the UK. Fellows are expected to be resident in London for the majority of the period of the award, and to make a contribution to the intellectual life of the Library.

In order to apply for this fellowship, please submit the following to pgr@bl.uk :

- Cover email with title of proposal and desired dates of Fellowship activity;
- Research proposal including objectives, methodology, expected outputs and Library collections to be explored (1000 words max);
- CV (2 page max).

All applications will be expected to demonstrate the following:

- Ability to communicate effectively verbally and in writing, internally and externally;
- How the proposed work will contribute to the personal and professional development of the applicant;
- Why the British Library collections are necessary for this research (applicants are strongly encouraged to explore [available catalogues and collection guides](#));
- How the proposed research will help the Library in its aim to open up the collection in new and interesting ways, to support work on solutions to the environmental challenges we face;
- The significance of the proposed research within the wider intellectual and cultural landscape;
- How the proposed research might engage different academic and public communities in sustainability and environmental issues.

All applicants will be notified of the outcome via email.

Application deadline: **Tuesday 7 January 2025, 12 noon.**

Please note late applications cannot be accepted.

Direct all queries to: pgr@bl.uk