

1994 South African elections in the British Library

Supervisor(s)	Mariam de Haan (Lead Curator, African Collections)
Team and department	African collections team African and Asian Collections, London (St Pancras)
Start date/timeframe	Earliest start: May 2025 Latest end date: July 2025
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 a hybrid placement At least 2 days a week on site (London, St Pancras) for a full-time placement or 1 day a week on site for a part-time placement
Context and nature of doctoral fellowship project	
<p>This doctoral fellowship will be hosted by the African and Asian Collections. The department acquires, manages and makes accessible materials relating to the histories and cultures of these areas to all our users. We do this through providing metadata and interpretation, documentation, digitization, publication and social media as well as exhibitions and public engagement activities.</p> <p>This project focuses on two donations of material from the South African elections held in 1994, which need to be catalogued. The material covers a wide range of formats and represents the output of the majority of political parties involved in the elections. The materials are a combination of voter education manuals, pamphlets, posters, photographs and election paraphernalia, which represent an overview of the 1994 elections. Cataloguing of this material is crucial in making it accessible and will support research into South African history, the 1994 elections and Southern African history at large.</p> <p>In addition to cataloguing, the student will have the opportunity to identify one aspect of the material – such as a person, event, place, format or subject – and explore this further. This research could lead to enhanced catalogue entries, blog posts or suggestions for further research.</p> <p>The doctoral fellowship will provide a hands-on introduction to the activities and operations of the British Library. Supervised by Mariam de Haan, Lead Curator of African Collections, the doctoral fellowship will sit within the Asian and African Department. Alongside weekly meetings, pastoral support, and regular training opportunities, the student will benefit from being part of a welcoming and supportive wider team.</p>	

Tasks and outcomes

The primary focus of this doctoral fellowship will be to create metadata for the material related to the South African election donations in order to improve access to the collection.

The tasks of this doctoral fellowship includes:

- Cataloguing material of the South African election donations, creating descriptions for each item.
- Flagging any items needing conservation.
- Identifying particularly rare items that may be suitable for digitisation.

Additionally, the candidate will identify one aspect of the donations and explore this within the wider context of South African political history.

The main outcomes envisaged for this placement are:

- Detailed catalogue entries.
- An expression of the research into one aspect of the South African election material, which could take the form of, for example, a blog post, enhanced catalogue entries, a series of Tik Toks.

Training and development opportunities

Doctoral fellowship 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 doctoral fellowship will provide:

- Practical Cataloguing Experience
 - Reading and handling archive material in multiple formats.
 - Creating detailed catalogue entries.
- Experience of working in a curatorial team
 - Collaborating with colleagues within different teams at the Library.
- A hands-on introduction to the activities of a major research library and cultural organisation, with a particular focus on cataloguing, collection management and public engagement.
- Weekly support from the lead supervisor to facilitate working with the archive and develop the project together.
- The chance to liaise with different audiences and stakeholders within and outside the institution, through meetings, presentations, blogs, and other publications.

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 doctoral fellowship project requires the following:

- A good understanding of South African history and/or political history (essential).
- An understanding of and strong interest in working with metadata (desirable).
- High level of time-management skills (desirable).

Application deadline: **5pm UK time (GMT) on Tuesday 18 March 2025**

Eligibility

- The Library welcomes applications from all current PhD students registered with a UK university.
- International PhD students are eligible to apply, subject to meeting any UK visa/residency requirements. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure they are meeting these requirements. We are unable to provide sponsorship or advice for visas.
- The Library is an equal opportunities placement provider and encourages applications from PhD students from all backgrounds.
- Applicants must have the support of their supervisor. Successful applicants must secure the approval of their institution and training grant provider as necessary.

In addition, the following applies:

- If you are in the final year of your PhD: You are eligible to apply, provided that you are able to undertake all of the placement prior to submission of your thesis.
- If you have not begun your PhD: If you have been accepted as a PhD student from academic year 2025/26 onwards, you are not eligible to apply in this round. Feel free to contact us to be added to our mailing list and receive notification of future opportunities. We have a PhD Placement Scheme that runs annually.
- For both on-site and remote, you must be based in the UK at the time of undertaking the fellowship.
- The Library is responsible for all documentation relating to the fellowship, and no additional paperwork will be completed. The student is advised to check in advance of application that the Library's paperwork is acceptable for their HEI's internal processes

Funding

This opportunity is funded thanks to the generous support of an external donor. The award will be £1650 per month, pro rata. Students who have previously had placement funding of any kind are not eligible to apply.