

Theme: Academy and society in the Balkans 1850-1950

This fellowship is based in the Southeast European team within the British Library's European Collections division. The team curates an internationally-significant collection of books, journals, newspapers and archival materials relating to the history, languages and literature, art and social sciences of Southeast Europe.

The Southeast European collections contain important collections of Balkan academic publications, including monographs, journals and conference proceedings. These collections include primary source materials, edited collections of documents and research papers across all disciplines. The materials are in a mixture of South Slav (Bulgarian, Macedonian, Serbo-Croatian and Slovene), Romanian, Albanian, and other European languages, in Roman and Cyrillic scripts. Together, the collections constitute a major scholarly resource, with the potential to inform research and cultural engagement activities across a wide range of subjects relating to literary, scientific, political and intellectual life in Balkan societies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

At present, the research potential of these collections is constrained by the fact that they are dispersed throughout the British Library's online catalogues with varying levels of metadata and therefore hard to find, assess and promote as a collection. The fellowship provides the opportunity to address this. The Fellow will work with our curators, cataloguers and reference specialists in order to explore the collections and establish in detail, for the first time, their extent, breadth and depth. The Fellow will work with BL colleagues towards making the collections more readily accessible online, also helping to set them in their historical context. There will be opportunities for the Fellow to gain first-hand experience of the work of a major national research library, to develop and apply skills in metadata-enhancement, cataloguing and provenance research, and to engage actively with academic researchers and other potential users of the collections. The Fellow will work to identify complementary collections held in other UK institutions, as well as helping to identify complementary holdings in the countries of origin. Based on the findings, the Fellow will inform discussions relating to possible future BL international collaborative projects around the collections.

This fellowship is open to candidates from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. The specific regional focus of the fellowship will take account of the successful applicant's interests and language skills.

Key Responsibilities

- To identify and explore the Library's holdings relating to the theme
- To work with relevant BL experts to help evaluate and enhance the cataloguing and conservation status of these holdings
- To identify complementary holdings in other UK institutions
- To identify complementary holdings in country/countries of origin and gaps in the BL collections
- To undertake research into the provenance and history of Library's Balkan academic publications
- To contribute to discussions on future collaborative projects
- To promote the Library's holdings in this area to general and scholarly audiences

Deliverables

- A report on the Library's holdings in this area, with recommendations for improving their discoverability
- Delivery of 'quick wins' – initial immediate steps to enhance accessibility – as identified in the report
- A survey of complementary holdings in other institutions in the UK and in the country/countries of origin
- Production of text and bibliographic information for online guides to the holdings of the Library and other institutions, to help users to find the materials and to understand them
- Social media promotion of the holdings via the BL and Chevening platforms, including posts on the BL's European Collections blog
- Organisation of a workshop or other event at the BL to exchange knowledge with academic experts or other potential users of the collections
- Participation in a stakeholder event at the BL that promotes the value of the BL-Chevening Fellowship programme

Skills and experience to be gained

- Staff-level access to unique British Library collections and research resources
- Practical 'hands-on' training in metadata systems, cataloguing processes and bibliographic standards
- Experience in disseminating project outcomes and in engaging different audiences through various communication channels
- Opportunities to apply language skills to support the strategic needs of a major research library
- Experience in the planning and organising of events
- Networking opportunities with British Library colleagues and external stakeholders
- Opportunities to attend the wide-ranging suite of British Library training courses, professional development workshops and staff talks

Candidate requirements

- Degree or equivalent in a subject relevant to the Library's European collections
- Knowledge of the history, languages and cultures of Southeast Europe
- Knowledge of Cyrillic script
- Excellent written and spoken English
- Experience in a research library, academic or other appropriate environment
- Some knowledge of cataloguing systems, standards or processes, ideally with demonstrable ability to catalogue materials to appropriate standards (AACR2 and MARC)
- Interest in library and archive collections and in learning about the curatorial work of a research library
- Ability to work both independently and in a team
- Strong computer skills, with experience of working with databases and/or metadata an advantage