

A Paper World: The Collection & Investigation of Plant Materials for Paper Making, c.1830-1914

AHRC PhD Studentship

Applications are invited for a fully-funded PhD studentship on the history of collections of plant materials for paper making at Royal Holloway, University of London, in partnership with the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. This award, tenable for three years and covering both fees and an enhanced maintenance grant, is made by the TECHNE AHRC Doctoral Training Partnership under the National Productivity Investment Fund Partnership Award scheme. The project, due to begin in September 2017 or as soon as possible thereafter, will be supervised by Professor Felix Driver (at Royal Holloway) and Dr Mark Nesbitt (RBG Kew).

The Project

Innovations in the technology of print and the vast expansion of publishing during the nineteenth century stimulated the global search for new sources of paper. A wide variety of natural sources for paper-making were experimented with prior to the large-scale mechanisation of papermaking using wood pulp from the 1880s. While the economics of papermaking attracted the attention of industrialists and botanists, there was also a longstanding ethnographic interest in techniques of indigenous papermaking, stimulated by the accounts of overseas travellers and explorers. This combination of economic and ethnographic interest inspired the assembling of collections of different types of paper, analogous to collections of indigenous textiles in the period. Focussing on the unrivalled collection of plant materials and manufactured papers from many parts of the world held in the Economic Botany Collection at Kew, the studentship provides an opportunity to explore the economic, cultural and technical significance of the search for alternative sources of material for paper making during the Victorian era. The PhD thesis is likely to take the form of a series of well-chosen case studies, raising wider questions concerning the formation of knowledge about raw materials, technologies and commodities. In addition to work with the Economic Botany Collection at Kew, the project will involve archival research in official, business and private papers at Kew and elsewhere in the UK. There will also be opportunities within the public programmes of RBG Kew to present this research to wider audiences. The project forms part of an ongoing research collaboration between Royal Holloway and Kew Gardens, including a large AHRC project led by the co-supervisors ('The Mobile Museum: Economic Botany in Circulation').

The Studentship

The studentship includes a stipend of £16,553 (plus fees at home/EU rates) for three years. There is an additional NPIF £550 per year to facilitate engagement with the Partner, and students can apply for an additional six months stipend to engage in extended development activities such as work placements. As a TECHNE student, the successful candidate will have full access to the TECHNE Doctoral Training Partnership development activities and networking opportunities, joining a cohort of about 50 students per year from across seven universities in London and the south-east. TECHNE students can apply for additional funding to support individual or group training and development activities.

Applicants should have a good undergraduate degree in history, geography, anthropology or other relevant discipline. Preference may be given to candidates with prior experience in working with material culture, museum and/or archival collections, though others are encouraged to apply. Applicants must meet the UK/EU residency requirements as described in paragraphs 43-46 of the 'Conditions of Research Council Training Grants' and comply with conditions set out in the AHRC Training Grant Funding Guide.

How to Apply

Applicants should submit (1) a two-page curriculum vitae, including contact details of one academic referee, and (2) a 1-2 page letter outlining your qualification for the studentship to: Professor Felix Driver, Dept of Geography, Royal Holloway, University of London, Egham, Surrey, TW20 0EX (f.driver@rhul.ac.uk) no later than **4 August 2017**.

Interviews are scheduled to be held at Kew on **16 August 2017**.

Further Information

Full project details

<https://www.rhul.ac.uk/geography/documents/pdf/newsarticles/ahrc-techne-partnership-award-full-description.pdf>

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