

Theme 2: Big data and libraries

Businesses, industries, governments, universities, scientists, consumers, and nonprofits are generating data at unprecedented levels and at an incredible pace. Big Data presents a new opportunity for libraries across the world to use their resources and skills to help their users in the new ways and also to form new types of international collaborations.

This fellowship opportunity is to work with the teams across the British Library to broaden our understanding of how big data and open data developments might benefit libraries across the world and contribute to greater global collaboration between libraries and with other relevant stakeholders.

The British Library is the national library of the United Kingdom and one of the world's greatest research libraries. We provide world-class information services to the academic, business, research and scientific communities. The Library's collection has developed over 250 years and exceeds 150 million separate items. Since 2013, we have been mandated to gather a comprehensive record of the UK's digital output – from e-journals to the entire UK web domain – preserving hundreds of terabytes of digital holdings for the nation.

As our role as a national library in the digital environment evolves, we have an ever-deeper connection with the use of data. As a collecting institution, we are the custodian of one of the largest collections of library data anywhere in the world, as well as vast sets of data within our collection itself, in all disciplines from humanities to sciences. As an Independent Research Organisation, we also create and analyse new datasets.

And as a world leader in our field, we are actively involved in collaborative, worldwide efforts in developing data standards, interoperability, citation methods and long-term preservation and persistence of data resources.

The Library enjoys a prominent role within the UK science and research infrastructure. For example, the British Library at St Pancras hosts the headquarters of The Alan Turing Institute, the UK's national institute for data sciences.

This fellowship will provide a unique opportunity to help the Library understand key challenges and new opportunities arising in this area.

Key responsibilities

- Review key policy developments related to big data in international context and present findings to the British Library.
- Identify innovative big data projects undertaken by libraries and cultural institutions across the world and present selected case studies to the British Library.
- Organise an international workshop to discuss key challenges and opportunities arising and produce a paper to summarise the workshop findings.
- Provide input into any policy and strategy documents on themes of big data which the British Library might be developing during the fellowship.
- Research relevant organisations with an excellent track record in data and digital developments and propose new international partnerships that are synergistic to the British Library purposes and could lead to new, innovative projects in developing the Library's data capability.

Deliverables

- Report to the British Library comprising an options appraisal and set of recommendations on a range of developments and potential partnerships that would enhance the Library's data capability and international reach.
- An international workshop looking into big data issues for libraries and similar cultural and research institutions.
- A stakeholder event that promotes the BL collections and the Chevening/British Library Fellowship.
- Other engagement and outreach work through the BL blogs and Chevening social media platforms.

Candidate requirements

- Degree or equivalent in a subject relevant to data science and/or information technology and/or librarianship
- Excellent written and spoken English
- The project will focus on policy, strategy and business models, rather than technology solutions, but the candidate will need a sufficient technical knowledge to be able to understand big data projects and digital environment
- Interest in digital and data-driven innovation
- Excellent attention to detail
- Good oral and written communication skills
- Strong computer skills