

## AHRC PHD STUDENTSHIP

# Economies of Natural History: Publishing Science in Victorian and Edwardian Britain



Watercolour (right) of *Griffinia ornata* by Harriet Thiselton-Dyer and the corresponding plate (left) produced for *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, 1878. Image courtesy of the Trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

**Royal Holloway, University of London and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew** are delighted to invite applicants for a collaborative AHRC PhD studentship commencing October 2024, approved under the Collaborative Doctoral Award scheme funded by Techne.

The studentship – funded by the Techne AHRC Doctoral Training Partnership – will focus on an unresearched publishing-house archive and will enable the creation of new knowledge about natural history publishing in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The successful applicant will have the opportunity to work across academic, heritage, and archival contexts.

The project will be supervised by Professor Felix Driver (RHUL), Fiona Ainsworth (Head of Library and Archives, RBG Kew), Professor Innes M. Keighren (RHUL), and Dr Caroline Cornish (RBG Kew). The student will be expected to spend time at both RHUL and at Kew, as well as becoming part of the wider cohort of Techne-funded students and the PhD cohort at RBG Kew. The student will have the opportunity to undertake placements at Kew or elsewhere. The studentship can be undertaken on either a full- or part-time basis.

We encourage the widest range of applicants for this studentship and are committed to welcoming those from different backgrounds and non-standard pathways. Applicants should have a Master's degree in a relevant subject or be able to demonstrate equivalent experience in a professional setting.

### **Project Overview**

This project focusses on the role of Lovell Reeve & Co. as the leading natural history publisher of the mid-Victorian era, responsible for a diverse range of publications in the field, including *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*. Intellectually, the project draws inspiration from the Plant Humanities, exploring human-plant relations through questions of economy, labour, culture, and technology. The project engages with research in four academic areas: (1) the history of science publishing, moving the focus from canonical authors and singular texts to an investigation of the material conditions and changing readerships for natural history texts; (2) the history of the global trade in natural history specimens and its links to science publishing networks; (3) research on the social and economic significance of serial publication, in multi-part book series as well as periodicals; (4) research on the history of botanical illustrations, especially what can be deduced of the 'hidden histories' of working-class designers and women artists and their agency in the making of botanical knowledge.

The core research aims are:

1. To understand the changing relationship between natural history publishing and the specimens trade in Victorian and Edwardian Britain.
2. To examine how publishers managed the production and distribution of specialist illustrated works requiring significant capital investment, skilled labour, and knowledge of a changing market.
3. To explore the role of publishers in the field of natural history and how this evolved in an era of science popularisation, specialisation, and technological innovation.
4. To consider how natural history publishers combined the production of single works and serials, and how this changed over time in response to shifting scientific and economic priorities.

5. To explore what can be deduced of the hidden histories of working-class and female agency in the history of botanical publishing, especially how publications such as *Curtis's Botanical Magazine* afforded opportunities for social mobility.

The central resource for this project is the archive of Lovell Reeve & Co. The archive's combination of materials – including accounts, ledgers and stock records, brochures and advertisements, clippings of reviews, author correspondence, and botanical plates and patterns (intermediary stages between drawing and engraving) – is unusual, providing the basis for an innovative investigation of publishing practices. Kew's extensive library holdings will enable the integration of archival research with the study of published works. The project will also involve research in other publishers' archives in Reading, London and Edinburgh, and the collections of leading and lesser-known scientists. Digital resources (notably the Biodiversity Heritage Library) will further contextualise the Lovell Reeve business. The strongly visual nature of the archive will require a sustained engagement with visual methodologies.

The student will have the opportunity to be embedded at Kew and will have staff-level access to the archive. They will also be able to conduct wider public engagement, and this may take the form of, for example, an exhibition of visual materials, or an educational or community project, supported by Kew staff.

### **Details of Award**

The Techne CDA Studentship will fund a full-time studentship for 3.5 years (42 months), with an option to extend this by up to a further 6 months for placement/career enhancing activity. Students must submit their thesis within their funded period.

The award includes a full maintenance grant for both home and international students. The National UKRI Doctoral Stipend for 2023/24 is £20,622/year, inclusive of London weighting. Figures for 2024/25 will be available in Spring 2024.

The award pays tuition fees up to the value of the full-time home UKRI rate for PhD degrees.

**Note for international applicants:** where an international student is successful, RHUL will make an additional tuition fee award, wholly covering the difference between the home and the international tuition fee, meaning that no additional fees are payable.

Further details of AHRC Studentships can be found on the UKRI website:

<https://www.ukri.org/what-we-do/developing-people-and-skills/find-studentships-and-doctoral-training/get-a-studentship-to-fund-your-doctorate/>

The successful candidate will be a Techne DTP student and will be required to attend mandatory events as part of their studentship terms and conditions with Techne. Please see the Techne website <http://www.techne.ac.uk/> for more information.

### **Eligibility**

This studentship is open to both Home and International applicants.

To be classed as a home student, candidates must meet the following criteria:

- Be a UK National (meeting residency requirements), or
- Have settled status, or
- Have pre-settled status (meeting residency requirements), or
- Have indefinite leave to remain or enter.

Further guidance can be found here: <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/UKRI-030221-Guidance-International-Eligibility-Implementation-training-grant-holders-V2.pdf>

- Applicants should ideally have, or expect to receive, a relevant Master's-level qualification by the time of taking up the appointment or be able to demonstrate equivalent experience in a professional setting (potential candidates may, for instance, already be working in the publishing, archives, or heritage sectors). Suitable disciplines are flexible but could include History (particularly History of the Book), Historical Geography, English, Gender Studies, Archives and Records History, Museum Studies, Illustration.
- The studentship offers a distinctive opportunity to undertake a collaborative PhD with a university and a heritage institution. As such, students should demonstrate their interests and aptitude for exploiting the unique possibilities of a studentship that will allow them to develop career-enhancing skills in heritage and public engagement, and to contribute to the cultural and intellectual life of both institutions.
- As part of our commitment to challenging the under-representation of Black and Global Majority students amongst doctoral researchers, we particularly welcome applications from applicants who identify as POC, BAME and/or part of Black and Global Majority racial and ethnic groups.

All applicants must meet UKRI terms and conditions for funding. See: <https://www.ukri.org/funding/information-for-award-holders/grant-terms-and-conditions/>

### **Project details and how to apply.**

Please include in your application:

- Your CV
- A cover letter (1,500 words max.) explaining why you are interested in researching this topic, including what you would bring to the project and how you think you would develop it to reflect your own interests and expertise
- A sample of writing. This could be a piece of academic writing (e.g., an MA dissertation); or a text written in the course of any current or previous employment or voluntary/community work.
- Candidates invited to an online interview will be asked to supply a transcript of their university-level grades.
- The successful applicant will be expected to apply formally through RHUL's doctoral school following notification of the interview outcome.
- All prospective students are strongly advised to first make informal contact with the lead supervisor, Professor Felix Driver ([F.Driver@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:F.Driver@rhul.ac.uk))

Please send your application documents to [F.Driver@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:F.Driver@rhul.ac.uk) by the deadline of **15<sup>th</sup> January 2024**.

**Closing date:** 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024

**Interview date:** 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024

**Candidates notified:** 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024

The successful candidate will work closely with the project supervisors to revise the proposal, taking into account the interests of the student, and submitting the revised proposal to the Techne consortium by **21 February 2024**. A final decision on funding will be received from Techne by 26 April 2024.

#### **Further Information**

- For informal enquiries about the project, please contact Professor Felix Driver (F.Driver@rhul.ac.uk)
- For information or queries about the RHUL application process, please contact [techneRHUL@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:techneRHUL@rhul.ac.uk)

The AHRC Techne consortium is comprised of Royal Holloway, University of London; Brunel University, London; Kingston University; University of Brighton; University of Roehampton; University of the Arts London; University of Surrey; University of Westminster.

For further information about the research environment at Royal Holloway, see:

<https://www.rhul.ac.uk/Geohumanities>

For information about Interdisciplinary Research at Kew, including the Plant Humanities, see

<https://www.kew.org/science/interdisciplinary-research>