



The AHRC-Smithsonian Fellowships in Digital Scholarship Call Document

Introduction

Building on a successful history of collaboration, the Arts and Humanities Research Council of the United Kingdom (AHRC) and the Smithsonian Institution are pleased to announce a new joint fellowship programme in digital scholarship. Through enhanced collaboration between world-leading institutions in the UK and US, the fellowships will seek to build digital research expertise in museums and cultural / heritage sectors, facilitate the application of new digital methods and approaches and increase awareness of the impact and value of digitisation and digital collections.

The fellowships will be research-based and enable eligible scholars from UK institutions to undertake research at the Smithsonian, and for eligible scholars from US institutions to undertake research at leading museums and cultural / heritage institutions in the UK. The fellowships will be held over a one year period, which will include a funded placement of between 3 and 6 months. It is anticipated that around 5 fellowships will be available in each 'direction'.

Funding provided by the AHRC to support this activity will be drawn from AHRC's allocation through the National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF) and, from within that, the Rutherford Fund, which provides funding for fellowships attracting highly skilled researchers from across the globe to conduct research in the UK.

This Call document should be read in conjunction with the application guidance which can be found [here](https://ahrc.ukri.org/documents/guides/Smithsonian-Fellowships-guidance/) (<https://ahrc.ukri.org/documents/guides/Smithsonian-Fellowships-guidance/>).

Please take note of the following definition of terms, applicable throughout this Call document and the application guidance:

Fellowship	This refers to the year-long period for which successful applicants will be Rutherford Fellows or Digital Scholarship Fellows.
Award period	This is one year from the stated start date, which must be no later than February 1 st 2019.
Host organisation	This refers to the organisation in the UK or US at which the Fellow will spend the period of the Funded Placement (see below).
Home organisation	This refers to the institution in the UK or US by which the Fellow is / will be employed.

Award holding organisation	This refers to the organisation in the UK that will receive the award and distribute funding to the Fellow, either as the host organisation for applicants based in the US, or the home organisation for applicants based in the UK.
Funded placement	This refers to the funded 3-6 month placement period which will be spent by the Fellow at the host organisation.

Research context

In response to the technological shift taking place in the cultural and creative industries as a result of enhanced digitisation, mobile access, social media and immersive technologies, both the Smithsonian and similar research-led large museums and cultural institutions in the UK are significantly scaling-up their work in areas of digital scholarship. This offers great potential in terms of (for example) research methods, novel approaches to data analysis, skills development, museum curation, access to materials and archives, dissemination and audience engagement and experience.

The aim of this new partnership is to build capacity through shared approaches to the innovative research application of digital technologies / methods in museums and heritage / cultural institutions. It will help to nurture and accelerate thinking about the potential for digital scholarship in such institutions, facilitate and encourage pilot projects on areas of mutual interest, pioneer new approaches to audience engagement and experience and support discussions and outreach about the value and impact of digitisation and digital collections.

The fellowships will be at the centre of a broader suite of transatlantic activity aiming to establish world-leading research collaborations in digital scholarship. This will include a series of workshops and networking activity extending to key partners in the UK and US and engage other leading researchers from both countries, where possible, connecting with associated programmes such as the transatlantic 'Digging into Data' programme and AHRC's 'Digital Transformations' theme.

The Fellowships

Applications are sought from researchers for funded placements based at any of the eligible institutions identified in 3) below. They may address a broad range of subject areas and methods but must:

- Be focused on the innovative research application of digital methods in museums and cultural / heritage institutions and offer the potential to have a transformational impact in the field;
- Be research-driven, delivering outputs as appropriate, and form part of a wider research project / activity / collaboration of at least one years' duration;
- Present a career development opportunity for the fellow which includes how they will be supported during their time at the host institution;
- Support cross-disciplinary research which brings the arts and humanities together with digital technologies and other relevant fields;

- Build new links between discrete collections in the host and home institution, working across types of material in the Smithsonian and UK institutions, with the capacity to consolidate relationships between the respective institutions - and the UK and US more widely - in the focus area;
- Demonstrate the unique value of undertaking the fellowship at the identified host; i.e. why the research proposed can only be undertaken there, and the way in which this will enrich the wider research project;
- Be collaborative, demonstrating how the fellowship will embed knowledge exchange activity and engage other networks of researchers in the UK and US both within the host and home institutions and more widely;
- Demonstrate plans for the sustainability of the outputs and networks formed through the fellowship beyond the funding period.

The award will be held over a one-year period, which will include a funded placement in the host institution of between 3 and 6 months' duration. This could be undertaken either as a continuous period or in one month 'blocks' distributed over the course of the year. As above, it is expected that this would form part of a wider research project / activity / collaboration taking place over the full year, but this need not constitute 100% of the applicants' time – i.e. it might be drawn from the research time already allocated to the applicant as part of their contract at the home institution. A rationale would need to be provided for any given approach on this basis within the application. These fellowships are available to those working on a part-time basis, but the 3-6 month period of the funded placement must be undertaken on a 100% time basis.

Fellowships will be awarded and classified as follows:

- **AHRC- Smithsonian Rutherford Fellowships:** supporting researchers based at US institutions to undertake funded placements at eligible institutions in the UK. Up to 5 fellowships will be awarded. **Please note that we are particularly keen to support researchers who are at an early stage of their research career and / or heritage / museum professionals seeking to develop their research profile and leadership.**
- **AHRC – Smithsonian Digital Scholarship Fellowships:** supporting researchers from eligible UK institutions to undertake research fellowships at the Smithsonian Institution. Up to 5 fellowships will be awarded. Please note that due to the requirements of the source from which this funding is derived, **these fellowships are targeted at those who are at an early stage of their research career and /or heritage/ museum professionals seeking to develop their research profile and leadership.**

Eligibility

Rutherford Fellowships (US-UK)

- Applications may be submitted by researchers based at any research-intensive institution in the US – including institutions from beyond the University sector such as museums, libraries and archives - to undertake a placement at any eligible UK institution. Applicants should hold a contract of employment that extends beyond the year-long period in which the fellowship will fall and in which the wider research activity sits, and should in their application explain how the proposed project is relevant to, and draws upon, collections / materials / expertise / at the Smithsonian and UK host institution. Applicants based at US institutions who do not currently have an affiliation with the Smithsonian will be able to apply to become a fellow or

research associate at the Smithsonian if successful. Given the assumption that projects will require extensive access to collections/materials/data/expertise at the Smithsonian (unless an exceptional case can be made otherwise), all applicants will be required to provide a Letter of Support from the Smithsonian. For those that do not hold Smithsonian affiliation, this will need to identify the proposed host unit and a key point of contact / mentor therein. Where these links do not already exist, applicants should contact NMAH-Digital@si.edu in order to facilitate contact with the relevant unit.

- Rutherford Fellows may be hosted by a UK museum or heritage /cultural institution which is either: i) eligible to receive AHRC funding (for example as an Independent Research Organisation (IRO) or University Museum) or ii) working in partnership with an institution eligible to receive AHRC funding (either an IRO or Higher Education Institution (HEI)). A Letter of Support will also be required from the proposed host in the UK. Further information on IROs eligible to receive AHRC funding can be found [here](#). Further information on HEIs eligible to receive AHRC funding can be found [here](#).

AHRC Digital Scholarship Fellows (UK-US)

- Applications for prospective fellows from the UK may be submitted by researchers based at i) a UK museum or heritage /cultural institution eligible to apply for AHRC funding (for example as an IRO or university museum) or ii) a UK HEI which is working in close partnership with a museum or heritage / cultural institution which will co-mentor and support the fellow and their research. Applicants should either i) hold a contract of employment with the institution submitting the proposal that extends beyond the year-long period in which the fellowship will fall or ii) provide a Letter of Support from the eligible organisation submitting the proposal confirming that such a contract would be offered in the event of the fellowship proposal being successful. Further information on IROs eligible to receive AHRC funding can be found [here](#). Further information on HEIs eligible to receive AHRC funding can be found [here](#).
- Prospective fellows from the UK can apply to be based at any of the Smithsonian's museums, research centers and cultural centers. Applicants should discuss their project in advance with relevant Smithsonian unit(s) and will require a Letter of Support and identified mentor. Where connections with the Smithsonian are not already existing, applicants should contact NMAH-Digital@si.edu at the Smithsonian to facilitate contact with the relevant unit.

All fellows will be expected to submit reports on outputs in accordance with the standard reporting requirements of the AHRC (via Researchfish) and Smithsonian as appropriate. It is also expected that fellows will present their projects at one or more of the workshop events in Washington and London as referenced above (for which travel and subsistence costs will be covered).

Eligible costs

Funding will be provided to successful fellows via a grant to the UK home / host institution to cover the following costs:

- **Salary costs:**
 - *for the AHRC – Smithsonian Digital Scholarships (UK-US):* salary costs for the 3 – 6 month period can be requested

- *for the Rutherford fellows (US-UK):* salary costs will continue to be paid by the fellow's employing institution
- **Living stipend** (to cover accommodation and travel to the host institution): £3,000 per month
- **Research costs:** up to £11k, based on travel at £1k per month for a maximum of 6 months; and materials / equipment / dissemination activity at up to £5k
- **Mentoring costs:**
 - *for the AHRC – Smithsonian Digital Scholarships:* mentoring costs will be covered via the time of staff at the Smithsonian
 - *for the Rutherford fellows:* a contribution to mentoring costs of £500 per month can be included.

All costs will be paid at 100% and should be fully justified in the application. Host institutions will be expected to provide support commensurate with the focus of the fellowship, and full access to the collections identified.

Application process

Due to the source of funding, applications for both the AHRC – Smithsonian Digital Scholarship Fellowships (UK-US) and Rutherford Fellowships (US-UK) must be submitted by an eligible UK institution. Where successful, this institution will hold the award and be responsible for its distribution to the fellow(s).

In the case of Rutherford Fellowships, it is expected that the prospective fellow will work closely with the proposed host institution in the UK and relevant Smithsonian museum / center in the completion of the application.

AHRC – Smithsonian Digital Scholarship Fellowship applicants will also be expected to engage the relevant Smithsonian museum / center during the completion of the application. As above, the Smithsonian will be able to facilitate this process where required. Where fellows are based at a UK HEI but working in close partnership with a museum or heritage / cultural institution, they will be required to engage that institution fully in the application process and articulate how it will provide appropriate mentorship / support over the course of the fellowship.

Applicants should refer to the accompanying application [guidance document](#) for full details on the application process.

Assessment

Applications will be assessed by a UK-US assessment panel with additional guidance on the feasibility of the proposed activity provided by experts from the Smithsonian and relevant UK institutions in an advisory capacity. Final funding decisions will be made by the AHRC and Smithsonian. A Letter of Support from the proposed host institution, reflecting the viability of the proposed fellowship in the context of the collections upon which it will be focused, will form an integral part of the assessment process.

The following assessment criteria will be applied:

- The innovative nature of the research proposed and the extent to which the fellowship has the potential to achieve a transformational impact on digital scholarship in museums and cultural institutions in the UK and US;
- The manner in which the research proposed will be based on complementary collections or complementary approaches in the UK and US and the extent to which this will bring new insights and approaches in both countries;
- The manner in which the fellowship will form part of, and enrich, a wider research project / collaboration;
- The quality of outputs arising from the fellowship and plans for dissemination;
- The potential for the fellowship to generate long-term partnerships and research collaborations between the UK and US;
- The potential for the fellowship to deliver a longer-term impact beyond the funding period, achieve a legacy and deliver new knowledge exchange activity;
- The value for money of the proposed activity;
- The nature of the support provided by the host institution during the fellowship period(s) and how this will support the fellow's career development.

Timeframe

- Call issued – early May 2018
- Application forms available in Je-S – 8th June 2018
- Call closes – 26th July 2018
- Assessment – early September 2018
- Panel meeting – mid September 2018
- Notification – Oct 2018
- Fellowships start no later than February 1st 2019