

Georgian Papers Programme

28th January 2017

The Georgian Papers Programme

Launched on 1 April 2015 by Her Majesty The Queen, the Georgian Papers Programme is transforming access to papers in the Royal Archives and Royal Library covering the period 1714-1837. By 2020 free digital access will be available to all the material relating to Britain's Hanoverian monarchs.

At the heart of the Programme is a partnership between the Royal Archives and Royal Library with King's College London (KCL). King's both frames multidisciplinary academic interpretation of the material and brings to bear its own track record of leadership in the development of digital access. It also has relevant collections that will feature in the partnership. The Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture (OI) and the College of William & Mary are sharing in this work as primary Programme partners for the USA. The Library of Congress is also contributing to the development of public engagement programming and enhancing digital access.

Including the papers of George I, II, III, and IV and William IV, as well as other members of the Royal Family, politicians, courtiers and the Privy Purse, the Programme promises to deepen our understanding and provide new insights into Britain's role in the world, its relationships with other European states, colonial America and the United States of America, as well as British politics, the Enlightenment, science, food, art collecting and patronage, life at court and the education of royal children. Careful checking has revealed that only 15% of the 350,000 pages have ever been published before. This will be augmented with a further 100,000 pages of manuscript material from the Royal Library.

Academic Research and Public Engagement

Unprecedented access to this large body of uncatalogued material offers a huge opportunity to enrich and energise 18th-century research internationally. It equally provides researchers and students alike with the rare opportunity to share in the shaping of the public access agenda and to help underpin Royal Collection Trust's declared intent to ramp up encouragement of research into its holdings.

The Programme will integrate research and teaching throughout King's by drawing on the College's rich heritage of multidisciplinary scholarship spanning Arts and Humanities, Social and Medical Sciences including Politics, War Studies, Geography and Psychiatry. In 2015 there was a conference hosted by the Science Museum in conjunction with the Centre for the History of Science and Medicine. There was also a workshop organised in collaboration with Historic Royal Palaces, the Centre for Enlightenment Studies and the team from the Yale 'Enlightened Princesses' exhibition. Both events included presentations from staff of Royal Collection Trust and participation from a variety of cultural institutes such as the National Maritime Museum, the British Library and British Museum.

Professor Amanda Vickery delivered the first public lecture on 'The Political Day' in March 2016 under the aegis of the Centre for Enlightenment Studies and the Georgian Papers Programme. This paper underpinned the significance of the untapped potential of the Royal Archives. In June, the Omohundro Institute conference in Worcester, Massachusetts, provided a welcome opportunity for Programme staff to engage with the wider early American scholarly community.



In October Sir Nicholas Hytner and Alan Bennett opened King's annual Arts and Humanities Festival with an 'In conversation' event prior to a screening of 'The Madness of King George III'. The following month, King's welcomed Bruce Ragsdale, the first of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association Fellows, as part of a partnership between King's and the Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington at Mount Vernon. Dr Ragsdale contributed to both teaching and research at King's. Dr Ragsdale led a research master class on George Washington's Mount Vernon plantation for third-year dissertation students, and for a broader audience, he delivered a lecture on Washington and slavery in association with the Georgian Papers Programme, the Centre for Enlightenment Studies at King's and the Centre for the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine. In November, the Programme also welcomed Professor Andrew O'Shaughnessy as its first National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution Visiting Professor, the first of five chairs to be sponsored by the society. As part of his tenure, Professor O'Shaughnessy worked extensively in the Royal Archives and will contribute to the scholarly life of King's when he is hosted by the War Studies Department in early 2017. His public lecture in February 2017 is expected to command a significant audience.

In 2015, four fellows were funded by the Omohundro Institute and King's. Alongside pursuit of their own research they explored the potential for the Georgian Papers to support research into a wide range of themes. They also fed back on requirements for cataloguing, indexing and portal design. In 2016 both King's and the Omohundro Institute decided to sustain support for fellowships for the duration of the Programme. King's has committed to funding a series of fellowships offering research experience to both undergraduates and postgraduates, as well as established scholars. The Omohundro Institute, through its Lapidus Initiative, has committed to support up to eight fellowships annually. The Mount Vernon Ladies Association has undertaken to sponsor four more fellowships across the life of the Programme.

Fellows in 2015	Area of research
Miranda Reading King's College London	Conservative Thought and Ideas of Moral Reform 1780-1832
Alice Marples King's College London	Collecting and Correspondence in the Papers of Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753): Creating and Exchanging Natural Historical Knowledge in Early Eighteenth-Century Britain
Professor Vincent Carretta Omohundro Institute	Authors of African Descent and the Georgian Court
James Ambuske Omohundro Institute	The Imperial Politics of Scottish Emigration to Revolutionary America, 1763-1803
Fellows in 2016	Area of research
Rick Atkinson Omohundro Institute	The early years of the War of American Independence
Rachel Banke Omohundro Institute	The political ideas and colonial schemes of Lord Bute
Felicity Myrone King's College London	The topographical map collection of George III
Daniel Reed King's College London	Sovereignty and Spirituality: the Ecclesiastical Household of the Early Georgians
Adam Crymble King's College London	Digitising a 227-year-old Dinner – a 'big data' approach to the dinner that George III ate with his wife on 6 February 1789
Andrew Beaumont Omohundro Institute	Lord North, first minister, 1771-1783, and his working patron-client relationship with George III
Daniel Robinson Omohundro Institute	European Geopolitics and British Foreign Policy in the Politics and Culture of Pre-Revolutionary America, c. 1713-1776

Bruce A. Ragsdale Mount Vernon Ladies' Association	George Washington at the Plow: Agriculture and Leadership in the Age of Revolution, comparing the Washington's agricultural interests with those of George III
Professor Suzanne Schwarz Omohundro Institute	Monarchy, Empire and Colonisation in West Africa, c. 1780-1820
Professor Cindy Kierner Omohundro Institute	Inventing Disaster: The Culture of Calamity from Jamestown to Johnstown

In October and December 2016, King's hosted two coffee mornings for the fellows in order to encourage scholarly exchange between the fellows themselves and between the fellows and scholars associated with the Programme. At the coffee mornings, fellows first presented their research and their plans for the archives and then the group debated the ideas and approach, sharing their familiarity with the collections or their insights into the topics.

Comments from Research Fellows:

"Being among the first to consult the Georgian Archives was a really memorable experience, and it was so exciting to work in Windsor Castle. I found a number of really interesting sources relevant to my research, and these have been included in my thesis." – Alice Marples (KCL)

"The evidence that I collected [...] has added significant value to my dissertation, and I now have wonderful material that will serve as the basis for future projects. I am grateful that I had the opportunity to dig through the archives and excited to see how future scholars will use this wonderful collection to transform our understanding of the Georgian era."—Jim Ambuske (OI)

"My fellowship [...] was a fascinating and rewarding experience. The wealth and depth of previously unseen material encouraged me to progress my research in new directions and opened avenues that had previously been hidden to me. Its staff are knowledgeable and expert and were of great help in finding more obscure parts of the archive." – Miranda Reading (KCL)

"I've worked in some exotic locations—Mogadishu, Mali, Baghdad, Kazakhstan, Riyadh—but none more evocative than the top of the Round Tower in Windsor Castle, where I spent the month of April 2016, as a Georgian Papers fellow." – Rick Atkinson (OI)

Digitised source material also allows the development of educational outputs from the Georgian Papers Programme. As part of the King's Undergraduate Research Fellow (KURF) scheme, the Royal Archives hosted three undergraduate researchers in summer 2016 working on projects designed by King's academics. The work of these undergraduate researchers underpinned a Georgian Papers Programme exhibition in the Strand Campus of King's. The KURF scheme will run again in the summer of 2017, and scholars will work with the Royal Archives to propose further projects. The first undergraduate module at King's utilising original material will start in January 2017, with other modules in development. In the longer term we envisage the preparation of online learning materials (MOOCs) and teacher packs suitable for use in study for GCSE and A levels. The latter will draw on the wide experience of Royal Collection Trust's Learning team and King's Education Faculty.

Finally, King's are committed to expanding and enriching the research activity on the Programme over the next five years. A number of King's scholars are writing large research bids for support from bodies such as the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the Economic and Social Research Council, and Zooniverse. These projects will encourage further interpretation and debate of the Georgian material. From June 2017, Professor Arthur Burns will formally take on the role of Academic Director for the Georgian Papers Programme at King's, devoting a significant portion of his time to coordinating and leading academic activity in the programme in the UK.

Digitisation, Cataloguing and Transforming Access

The Royal Archives are located in the Private Apartments at Windsor Castle, so physical access is limited. A new reading room was opened in July 2016 with double the capacity and longer opening hours. Nevertheless, digitisation offers a transformative solution to providing wider access to these historic papers. A new digitisation suite has been equipped to facilitate this work.

Full digitisation of holdings, catalogued in compliance with international standards, will ensure that researchers are provided with unmediated access to the documents.

To date, the papers digitised and catalogued include:

- The essays of George III, which offer insight into the king's intellectual life;
- An intimate and personal perspective is offered by Queen Charlotte's papers and diaries;
- The papers of several courtiers, which shed light on the education of the royal children and offer new angles on some political topics;
- Bills and receipts from George IV's Privy Purse are included to demonstrate the value of these papers for the history of the Royal Collection and the network of artists and artisans;
- Menu ledgers reveal the food served daily within the Royal Household;
- Inventories from the Royal Library will both illuminate the history of the Library and offer 'proof of concept' for the inclusion of Royal Collection Trust material from outside the Royal Archives.

These archives offer a rich introduction to the range of subjects covered by the papers and to the daily life of the court. They also serve as a test-bed for the technical development of the Programme including partnership working and workflows between the Royal Archives and Royal Library, King's College London and William & Mary. Of particular note will be work on harmonising authority controls and ontologies, and testing the potential for automated handwritten transcription in enhancing cataloguing and indexing. The Library of Congress's first National Digital Stewardship Resident outside the USA starts work in January 2017 to explore metadata interoperability.

Other documents in progress are:

- Material relating to George I, George II and William IV will extend the coverage from the first to the last Hanoverian King of the United Kingdom, and offers valuable evidence of the intergenerational relationships between members of the Royal Family.
- Mensil books, which are inventories and accounts for the supply of food in the Royal Household, will complement the menu ledgers.
- Material of relevance at King's includes the archive of the King George III Observatory at Kew and the Foreign and Commonwealth Library, as well as The King George III Collection of 18th century scientific instruments and apparatus on loan to the Science Museum.

Portal Launch

The first tranche of material, comprising over 33,000 pages, are freely available online through the new Georgian Papers Portal, launched in January 2017. The fully functional catalogue will provide access to the documents and allow downloads of the digital images for research purposes. This is set within a microsite on the Royal Collection Trust website, providing contextual material including accessible academic interpretation. Pages within royal.uk offer an entry point for a more general public, while the academic websites provide an access route for scholarly users. On their associated sites, King's and William & Mary will provide regular blogs and commentaries discussing both the activity on the Programme as well as interpretation of the material revealed by the cataloguing and digitising processes.



The Georgian Papers Programme has also supported Crux Productions to prepare a documentary about George III for broadcast on the BBC. This will be an opportunity to highlight for a public audience some of the Programme's early discoveries and to show the potential for future new insights.

Conservation

The Georgian Papers Programme represents a once-in-several-generations opportunity to conserve these papers. Stored in the damp basement of Apsley House for many years, they were transferred to the Royal Archives where the most grievous damage was treated and stabilised. One hundred years in the Round Tower of Windsor Castle has kept the papers in a near perfect environment. However the condition of the papers themselves varies from robust and well-conserved to well-thumbed and fragile.

The first comprehensive conservation survey of the Georgian Papers has therefore been carried out. The survey and report will allow us to put in place the right resources to carry out the work needed to leave the papers available for many future generations in the best possible state of conservation.

Supporters

We are grateful to those who have already contributed to the successful launch of the Georgian Papers Programme. Their support has funded key staff to manage the project and work on the cataloguing of the archives and metadata creation. As the Programme progresses our fundraising priority is to attract support for the research and scholarly work that will interpret and open up the archives to everyone.

Our thanks goes to The John S. Cohen Foundation, The Foyle Foundation, The Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation, Santander Universities UK, The National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution and The Sackler Trust, for their early support of the Programme.

The Georgian Papers Programme on the Internet

www.royalcollection.org.uk/georgianpapers

<https://www.royal.uk>

Information about fellowship and research opportunities in the Programme is offered in mirrored UK and US websites: <http://georgianpapers-us.wm.edu/> and <http://georgianpapersprogramme.com>.

