

**The Georgian Papers Programme: Report 2016**

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, both private and official, 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. 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 and the College of William & Mary are sharing in this work as primary Programme partners for the USA.

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 a 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.

In framing ideas for future research and public engagement King’s has arranged a number of seminars and events drawing on its rich heritage of multidisciplinary scholarship spanning Arts and Humanities, Social and Medical Sciences including Politics, War Studies, Geography and Psychiatry. In 2015 these have included a conference with the Science Museum in conjunction with the Centre for the History of Science and Medicine and a workshop in collaboration with Historic Royal Palaces, the Centre for Enlightenment Studies and the organisers of the Yale ‘Enlightened Princesses’ exhibition. All have 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.

A first public lecture under the aegis of the Centre for Enlightenment Studies and the Georgian Papers Programme was given by Professor Amanda Vickery on 'The Political Day' in March 2016. Professor Vickery‘s paper underpinned the significance of the untapped potential of the Royal Archives. The Omohundro Institute June 2016 conference in Worcester MA will provide a welcome opportunity for Programme staff to engage with the wider early American scholarly community.

Looking to the future, in October Sir Nicholas Hytner will open King’s annual Arts and Humanities Festival in an ‘In conversation’ with Alan Bennett prior to a screening of 'The Madness of King George III’. The following month the Programme will welcome 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 Sons of the American Revolution. 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 to pursue their own research and to explore the potential of the content of the Royal Archives and address the requirements for cataloguing, indexing and portal design. Because the material was uncatalogued, they were prepared for material to be of limited value to their research and the fellows' feedback on the documents consulted and their approach to searching have contributed to support the development of the Programme. Feedback confirmed the real potential of the material for a wide range of themes and the value of this approach.

In 2016 both King’s and the Omohundro Institute have taken the decision 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. In the autumn two post-doctoral fellows will be employed for three months each, to pursue in-depth research to support the development of two major research programmes. The Omohundro Institute, through its Lapidus Initiative, has committed to support up to eight fellowships annually. The Mount Vernon Ladies Association has agreed to sponsor a further five fellowships across the life of the Programme.

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

**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)*

*“As a historian of Revolutionary America writing about Scottish emigration to the colonies amidst an empire in crisis, I never expected that I would one day have access to George III’s original letters, those of his family, and the papers of his most trusted ministers. 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 am delighted to have been one of the first participants in the digitization project that will soon make these resources available to scholars worldwide.”—Vincent Carretta (OI)*

*“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. … The American stereotype of a tyrannical nincompoop quickly dissolves with a little exposure to the Georgian papers.” – Rick Atkinson (OI)*

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| **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 | Royal ecclesiastical patronage, bishops of the Northern province who held roles at Court and the Privy Council between 1714-1760 |
| 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 |

Ongoing digitisation of source material also makes possible the development of further educational components of the Georgian Papers Programme. At King’s this includes new interdisciplinary undergraduate and masters modules utilising original material. 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 the Royal Collection Trust’s Learning team and King’s Education Faculty.

**Digitisation, Cataloguing and Transforming Access**

The Royal Archives are located in the Private Apartments at Windsor Castle, so physical access is limited. Facilities have been redeveloped to provide an increased number of research spaces and will be open five days a week from July 2016. 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 essays of George III and Queen Charlotte's papers and diaries have been digitised and catalogued. Between them these archives offer a rich introduction to the range of subjects covered by the papers and an introduction to the daily life of the court. They will 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 the College of 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.

Other documents in progress are:

* 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.
* 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.
* Material relating to George I, George II and William IV extends 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.
* 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**

This first tranche of material will be made freely available online through a new Georgian Papers Portal to be launched in January 2017. This will be a microsite located within the pages of the Royal Collection Trust website. Alongside contextual material, a fully functional catalogue will provide access to the documents and allow downloads of the digital images for research purposes.

The Georgian Papers Programme is also working in association with 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 Programme therefore has initiated the first comprehensive conservation survey of the Georgian Papers. 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.