

**TECHNE AHRC Funded Studentship – Partnership Award
University of Roehampton and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew**

**Kew’s imperial archive:
Cataloguing Economic Botany in the *Miscellaneous Reports*, 1841-1928**

THE PARTNER INSTITUTIONS

The Department of English and Creative Writing at Roehampton has a vibrant and active research culture. The Department hosts the Popular Literature and Culture Research Group which includes research projects on various aspects of Victorian culture and nineteenth-century popular genres such as travel literature, journalism and botanical writing: <https://www.roehampton.ac.uk/research-centres/popular-literature-and-culture-research-group/>. In addition, the Publishing and Book History Research Group includes research projects on archives ranging from the medieval to the born-digital, with particular strengths in 18th and 19th century collections.

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew is a leading international institute for plant science, with one of the largest collections documenting plants and fungi. Kew’s Archives offer an unparalleled resource for studying the nineteenth-century management of the natural world. Kew hosts a number of arts and humanities research projects, such as the ‘Mobile Museum: Economic Botany in Circulation’ <https://www.kew.org/science/projects/mobile-museum-economic-botany-in-circulation> and two current TECHNE collaborative PhDs on the history of quinine and paper making. Kew provides a wide programme of in-house training and lectures.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This studentship offers the opportunity to research and study the history, composition and arrangement of a major collection held in the archives of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. The project focuses on the *Miscellaneous Reports*: 771 volumes of printed and manuscript material relating to the administration of the British colonial botanic gardens and stations, dating from the 1840s to 1928. The *Reports* document the economic botany of these regions through correspondence with Kew, printed reports, newspaper articles, and illustrative material such as maps, photographs and sketches. They are grouped by country and by economically useful product (such as tea, cinchona or rubber). Although mainly focused on economic botany, the collection also includes material relating to colonial history, geography and anthropology. As a whole, this collection offers a rich and as yet untold narrative of Kew’s global operations in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. No comparable collection exists in any other institution worldwide. The significance of the *Miscellaneous Reports* was recently recognised by the award of a Wellcome Trust Research Resources Grant for their conservation and cataloguing.

The project will take as its focus the creation, composition and arrangement - both past and present - of the *Miscellaneous Reports* as a collection. The successful applicant will be able to work in consultation with the archivist responsible for ordering the collection. The student will be encouraged to adopt an interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary approach, depending on the student’s own background and research interests. These may include - but are not limited to - imperial history,

cultural geography, literary studies, environmental studies, ethnobotany and archival studies. The student's own interests and archival discoveries should guide the project.

PROJECT STRUCTURE

The project consists of three parts, broadly corresponding to the three years of study:

1. Establishing the history of the collection: its foundation, principles of organisation, usage.
2. A detailed case study. After an initial scoping investigation, the student will select a few volumes for examination as a case study. Through a close reading of the chosen volumes, the student will be able to analyse the representation of particular plants, peoples and regions. The case study will allow the student to examine the process of knowledge production.
3. Study and critique of the current process of cataloguing. Through involvement in the work of indexing and cataloguing, the student will be able to address the problems of record administration and contemporary issues such as archive decolonisation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Key research questions include:

- How do the *Miscellaneous Reports* represent the relationship between people and plants? What does this reveal about nineteenth-century attitudes to the natural world?
- How does the miscellaneous form of the collection intersect with other genres such as travel writing, journalism and the botanical magazine?
- What does the archive reveal about Kew's institutional position: its links with colonial, governmental and commercial bodies worldwide?
- What do the *Miscellaneous Reports* tell us about the appropriation, circulation, application and organisation of knowledge in the nineteenth century?
- How do the *Miscellaneous Reports* help to construct the nineteenth-century discipline of economic botany?
- In what ways is the current cataloguing process informed by contemporary theories and techniques of archive management?

SUPERVISION

University of Roehampton

Director of Studies: Dr Kate Teltscher, Reader in English

[https://pure.roehampton.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/kate-teltscher\(8a31df8b-cf1b-4c7e-8d02-add4fa2ec295\).html/](https://pure.roehampton.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/kate-teltscher(8a31df8b-cf1b-4c7e-8d02-add4fa2ec295).html/)

Co-Supervisor: Dr Dustin Frazier Wood, Lecturer in English
[https://pure.roehampton.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/dustin-frazier-wood\(f17c6699-c6f1-4002-adbe-3bef8fc02e9e\).html](https://pure.roehampton.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/dustin-frazier-wood(f17c6699-c6f1-4002-adbe-3bef8fc02e9e).html)

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Supervisor: Kiri Ross Jones, Head of Archives.

Co-Supervisor: Professor Mark Nesbitt, Senior Research Leader, Economic Botany, and curator of the Economic Botany Collection

<http://www.marknesbitt.org.uk/research.html>

Advisor: Fiona Ainsworth, Head of Library, Art & Archives

<https://www.kew.org/science/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/people/fiona-ainsworth>

Training and Career Opportunities

The project offers exciting opportunities for students considering careers in the archives, museum or university sectors. It is envisaged that the successful applicant will have a workspace embedded with Kew Archive staff and have access to the same training opportunities and resources as a member of staff. The student will gain experience of professional archive management and public engagement activities. The post holder will be expected to present aspects of their work at seminars at the University of Roehampton, academic conferences and public outreach events organised by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Eligibility

Applicants should have an excellent first degree and have obtained, or are working towards a strong Masters degree in a relevant subject. Overseas applicants are not eligible for TECHNE studentships. To be eligible for a full award you must have no restrictions on how long you can stay in the UK and have been ordinarily resident here for 3 years. EU applicants are generally eligible for fees-only awards.

Informal Enquires

Please contact Dr Kate Teltscher, k.teltscher@roehampton.ac.uk

Application Process

Application deadline: 3pm (GMT) 19 November 2018.

Interviews will take place at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew on Tuesday 4 December 2018. The interview will involve a tour of the Archives.

For more information on the Roehampton application process and to apply please click here: <https://www.roehampton.ac.uk/graduate-school/degrees/>

The successful candidate will be directed to complete a TECHNE application through the Doctoral Training Partnership's online application system Flexi-Grant in December.

Please note:

- In Section 6, the Personal Statement section of the Online Application, you should indicate your relevant experience, qualifications, knowledge and

interests. Please also explain the particular approach that you would bring to the research project.

- In Section 7, the Research Proposal section of the Online Application. You should set out in greater detail your own approach to the project that we have outlined above. Please indicate the disciplines that your research would draw on.
- In the Additional Information section of the Online Application, please upload a sample of your written work. This may take any form. It could, for instance, be a Masters-level essay, thesis or report.