

PEARSON CREATIVE RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP

PEARSON

Do you want to clear a path through a jungle of 150 million documents from 3000 years of world history, to see how it changes your writing and your mind and to inspire young people?

This programme, generously sponsored by Pearson, enables one creative person each year to work in the British Library's Learning team, researching in the collections, recording this process, engaging with learners and making creative work.

The aims are:

- To provide groups of learners with an encounter with a professional creative researcher, who may inspire their learning through creative language and arts workshops and through an online journal.
- To provide a high-profile individual face to our strategic emphasis on 'research skills' - to show that these skills are not about data retrieval but about solving problems, making personal meaning from discovered sources and communicating ideas to others in novel ways with words, sounds and images.
- To expose the richness of resources in the British Library: showing that it holds not just books but music, maps, art and more; that it holds not just British culture but a world of cultures.
- To approach the Library's collection displays as 'a museum of thought' and to help us form an engaging critical framework for a deeper exploration of 'the world's knowledge'.

The tasks are:

- To spend substantial time freely researching the collections, recording your paths of research.
- To keep in mind some themes raised by the major exhibitions 'The Writer in the Garden' and 'Hans Christian Andersen'.
- To consider the Learning team's emerging methodology and contribute your insight to their delivery of the regular programme and projects (in 2005, on sound, nature and story.)
- To develop and lead two versions of a workshop that can be repeated regularly by you for learning groups. The workshops might include: sharing your process, discussion about the exhibitions, setting discovery & problem solving tasks, creative language activity and helping learners make a creative product. One version will be aimed at children aged up to 12 years, the other version for 12 years upwards. The workshops will be 90-120 minutes, up to two on one day per week. They can vary and evolve.
- To write and illustrate an inspirational webpage. This could include a 'creative research journal' (or weblog), items you've discovered in the collections and examples of your work, including creative products by workshop participants. The Fellow should be prepared to expose their fallibility, for example by asking learners to help them solve problems and interpret images or texts. There will be an existing web architecture and technical support for you.
- To make creative products (a book, a performance, some poems, an installation, digital art online, a staggering viral idea...) as an outcome of the research process adding to the body of art we use to inspire thought and learning. The product(s) would need to reflect upon this research process and raise questions about the Library and 'the world's knowledge'. These products would need to be easily shown or disseminated so that all learners and visitors can enjoy them.
- You may also be asked to give gallery talks or presentations about your work, to staff, to VIP guests or to local community groups.

We need you to be:

- Able to write and speak fluently in English to a high standard. (We positively welcome applications from people with diverse backgrounds.)
- Able to work in London two days a week for up to one year. (We cannot fund relocation, travel or accommodation expenses.)
- Able to communicate cultural ideas to a non-academic audience, using creative teaching strategies. Wanting to help others to express ideas in conversation with you. Able to inspire and encourage young people.
- Interested in documents, libraries and archives, with research built into your working practice.

For 2004-5 you are likely to be a published writer:

- addressing both adults and young people
- more interested in ideas and imagination than writing about a topic in a purely factual way
- interested in the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction, between poetic and descriptive forms of writing
- interested in connections between the oral and the written and in the transmission of meanings within and between cultures

More about the process

The first 'pilot Fellow' was artist and writer Rachel Lichtenstein, who wrote 'Rodinsky's Room' with Ian Sinclair and has been a resident artist at archives and libraries and is writing books about the East End of London. At the end of her Fellowship she produced an exhibition and book 'A Little Dust Whispered'. The current Fellow is the multimedia artist Ming Wong. He has helped interpret exhibitions of Modern Chinese Prints and The Silk Road. He is researching experimental drama in the Sound Archive.

This post, Pearson Creative Research Fellow, (i.e. you?) must be recruited by 5 November 2004, ready for the opening of the 'The Writer in the Garden' exhibition. The Fellowship would end after 'Andersen' exhibition in Autumn 2005.

Working arrangements are negotiable. The fee will be not less than £180 per day, paid on a freelance basis so that you will be responsible for your own tax and insurances. The Fellow must be able to work at least two days a week over a period of at least 38 weeks between the start of November 2004 and the end of October 2005. A small number of these days can be worked from home or elsewhere, but the fee is for active engagement with collections, audiences and the Learning team.

The contract includes a negotiation of the options for your intellectual property rights for different classes of product.

No studio or separate office is provided but there is a desk with computer. The Fellow may wish to spend a lot of time exploring collections in the Reading Rooms and with curators. There is a room for workshops, but much contact with learners takes place exploring the building and its exhibitions. There would be opportunities to visit local schools or groups, if you wished.

If you are interested

Please send a CV and any relevant weblinks, publications or documents that illustrate your career and approach. The CV should include the names and full contact details of two referees. Send by 10 August to bridget.mckenzie@bl.uk or to: Bridget McKenzie, Head of Learning, The British Library, 96 Euston Road, London NW1 2DB. If you post your application, please e-mail or phone us on 0207 412 7797 so that we can expect its arrival. We will compile a shortlist and interview candidates in the week of 18 August. We aim to make a decision by 1 September and announce the appointment soon afterwards.