

PhD Studentship in Collections-Based Research (English Literature and History)

Project title: Four local parish libraries: Henley, Abingdon, Didcot and Buckland.

Department: Department of English Literature and Department of History

Supervisors: Dr Rebecca Bullard (English Literature), Dr Mary Morrissey (English Literature), Dr Helen Parish (History)

Project Overview: Parish libraries emerged in the early modern period as a way of providing post-university education for the clergy and, in some degree, higher-level education for the laity. In the early years of the eighteenth century the clergyman Thomas Bray (1658-1730) organised the foundation of a network of parish libraries as part of the establishment of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, an institution that survives to the present time. Other parochial collections were assembled on an *ad hoc* basis by means of purchase and bequest. Parish libraries provide a window on to the cultures of knowledge that existed in early modern provincial communities. They reveal distinctive, local characteristics of religious and lay reading and book collecting from Reformation to Enlightenment.

The University of Reading Special Collections contains books belonging to four parish libraries in the Thames valley: Abingdon, Henley, Didcot and Buckland. They vary in size, from Henley's well-established and large collection to the more modest library of Buckland. Some volumes bear bookplates of the Bray trustees; some pre-date the systematisation of parish libraries in the eighteenth century and show evidence of having belonged to older chained libraries. The collections contain works about art, architecture and science as well as theology. These books invite research on various aspects of early modern parish life and the links between local, national and international intellectual culture. Such research might trace the provenance of the books and analyse the ways in which the collections came to assume their current shape; investigate the role that the collections played in the intellectual and religious life of the parishes; and/or compare these collections with other sources, either about other parish libraries or about the history of these particular parishes.

The Departments of English and History at the University of Reading provide a supportive environment for advanced research in early modern studies. The University's multidisciplinary Early Modern Research Centre offers a stimulating programme of seminars and conferences. The successful applicant will also participate in a nationally distinctive Doctoral Training Programme in Collections-Based Research.

Eligibility:

- Applicants should hold a minimum of a 2:1 Bachelors Degree in a relevant subject (e.g. History, English Literature, Theology or Religion).
- Due to restrictions on the funding this studentship is only open to candidates who are categorised for fees purposes as UK(Home)/EU.

Funding Details:

- Start date: October 2014
- Duration: 3 years full-time or part-time equivalent
- Value of award: Fees paid plus £3000 per annum bursary.

How to apply: To apply for this studentship please submit an application for a **PhD in English Literature** to the University – see <http://www.reading.ac.uk/Study/apply/pg-applicationform.aspx>

Please quote the reference GS-CBR7 in the '*Scholarships applied for*' box which appears within the *Funding Section* of your on-line application.

Application Deadline: 29 March 2014

Further Enquiries: For further details please contact Dr Rebecca Bullard:
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