

The Supplementary Finding Aids Project

This project uses existing manuscript catalogues and indexes which exist only on site at Kew, to create new entries for the online catalogue. We have thousands of these, all carefully created by previous generations of archivists, and they are full of information not yet included in our Online Catalogue. Getting the good information out, and converting it to a new online description, is a quick way of getting lots of documents described. (For example, we started out by using the Divorce Court's own indexes to create catalogue entries for about 120,000 divorce files between 1858 and 1937. These were very difficult to access before and are now very easy to find.)

We cover lots of types of record -

- Early 20th century changes of name (**easy**)
- Licences for the early release of male prisoners, 1850s onwards (**next level up**)
- Law suits in Chancery in the 1850s (remember Bleak House?) and the early 18th century (**need a good eye for handwriting – the earlier stuff is easier**)
- Exchequer depositions from the late 18th and early 19th century (**horrible 19th century handwriting but interesting descriptions**)
- Foreign Office correspondence from just before the First World War (**fascinating – but you do need a fair bit of confidence and ability, both in reading, creating a précis, and using EXCEL**)

So we have lots of varied projects, and you get the chance to mix and match a bit as you gain confidence. Ideally we want volunteers who can commit to at least 10 hours a week, as we find this more beneficial for you (easier to understand) and for us (less reminding you what you did last time you were in).

Roles

We are a friendly team, and always happy to welcome newcomers.

We input data to spreadsheet, so you need either to be acquainted with EXCEL already, or be prepared to give it a go. (The Foreign Office work needs good EXCEL skills.)

You will mostly be working from the manuscript catalogues rather than the actual documents you are describing, but quite often these paper catalogues are as old as the records they describe. We also check documents if problems arise – and problems often do! If you are happy reading mid-20th century handwriting, you should be able to cope with many of our manuscript catalogues.

Some people will be checking work and passing it on for conversion to the Online Catalogue.

Duration

This is a long term project, but with lots of shorter mini-projects within it, as we tackle the records series by series.