

Summary

Job title	Postdoctoral Research Assistant: James Murray and the Correspondence Networks of the <i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> , 1879–1915
Division	Humanities
Department	Faculty of English
Location	The Stephen A Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities, Woodstock Road, Oxford, OX2 6GG
Grade and salary	The starting salary offered is pro-rata to £39,424 (1 FTE amount) per annum (Research Grade 7, Scale Point 1), which is £31,539 (0.8 FTE amount) per annum.
Hours	Part-time (0.8 FTE)
Contract type	Fixed Term (54 months)
Reporting to	Dr Stephen Turton
Vacancy reference	188559
Additional information	It is anticipated that the researcher will take up their post on 1 January 2027, or as soon as possible thereafter. Closing date for applications is midday on Friday, 16 October 2026. Shortlisting is expected to take place the following week, and interviews will take place online during the week commencing 26 October 2026. This role requires on site working.

The role

The Faculty of English Language and Literature invites applications for two Postdoctoral Research Assistants to support 'James Murray and the Correspondence Networks of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 1879–1915', a project led by Dr Stephen Turton and funded by a Starting Grant from the European Research Council. Both posts are part-time (80%) and will run for 54 months (four and a half years). The starting salary is £39,424 (pro-rata) per annum, with annual incremental progression. The two successful candidates will work closely with each other and with Dr Turton throughout the period of employment.

Applicants should indicate in a cover letter whether they are applying for the post of Research Assistant 1 or Research Assistant 2, based on the responsibilities and criteria outlined below.

The project

The project aims to transform the study of English lexicography and allied research fields by creating a research platform based on the letters of James A. H. Murray. From 1879 to 1915, Murray was the chief editor of the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), the foremost historical dictionary of the English language. The letters sent to and by Murray provided him and his colleagues with vital information on words and texts from scholars, authors, and volunteers spread across six continents. Despite the letters' immense literary, linguistic, and historical value, they have never been systematically edited and published beyond a small pilot edition co-created by Stephen Turton and Charlotte Brewer (www.MurrayScriptorium.org).

This project will digitize the largest collection of Murray's editorial letters, held by Oxford's Bodleian Libraries. The project's major aims are:

- To photograph, catalogue, transcribe, edit, and publish Murray's correspondence (incoming and outgoing) for the period 1879–1915, and to use this edition to analyse how the letters shaped the content and methodology of the OED.
- To link the letters to a prosopography, map, and network graph which visualize their spatial and topical connections, in order to assess the international networks—scientific, literary, and political—in which the OED's makers participated.
- To render the letters into an annotated corpus, enabling quantitative linguistic insights into morphosyntactic variation and change in late 19th- and early 20th-century English.

2028 will mark the centenary of the completion of the OED's first edition, and this project is positioned to catalyse a new wave of research not only into the dictionary but into English language and literature, international intellectual networks, and the history of linguistics and related scientific disciplines during the most significant decades of the OED's making.

Responsibilities

- Collaborate with other members of the project team, as well as digital developers, researchers, librarians, and archivists external to the project, to achieve the aims outlined above.
- Develop new research methods to catalogue, transcribe, edit, and analyse the correspondence.
- Review and refine existing theories about the OED and its social and intellectual contexts based on the analysis of letters and other sources.
- Manage own academic research and administrative activities. This includes small-scale project management to co-ordinate tasks across multiple work packages, and conducting some independent research on topics of personal interest within the remit of the project.
- Work with the project lead to write biographies of key correspondents and commentaries on key topics in the letters (specific to Research Assistant 1).
- Work with the project lead to curate a map and network graph of correspondence and build and analyse a corpus of letter data (specific to Research Assistant 2).

- Participate in the organization of project events, both academic and public facing.
- Contribute to the project's outputs by preparing research publications (such as journal articles and book chapters) and presenting papers at conferences.
- Collaborate with the project team on the development of additional funding bids.
- Present papers at conferences or public meetings.
- Act as a source of information and advice to other team members.

Selection criteria

Essential selection criteria

- PhD/DPhil in English, Linguistics, or a related field, together with relevant experience.
- Publication record appropriate to career stage.
- Experience in handling and transcribing archival materials.
- Excellent communicative and organizational skills.
- Aptitude for collaborative and interdisciplinary work.
- Willingness to participate in public engagement, e.g. writing for non-academic audiences.

Desirable selection criteria

- Familiarity with digital humanities methods and tools, particularly text markup in XML.
- Knowledge of the history of English lexicography.
- Reading fluency in German and/or Dutch.
- Experience in conference or workshop organization.
- Wider understanding of nineteenth-century scholarly culture (specific to Research Assistant 1).
- Experience in corpus building and analysis (specific to Research Assistant 2).

Pre-employment screening

Standard checks

If you are offered the post, the offer will be subject to standard pre-employment checks. You will be asked to provide proof of your right-to-work in the UK; proof of your identity; and (if we haven't done so already) we will contact the referees you have nominated. If you have previously worked for the University we will also verify key information such as your dates of employment and reason for leaving your previous role with the department/unit where you worked. You will also be asked to complete a health declaration so that you can tell us about any health conditions or disabilities for which you may need us to make appropriate adjustments.

Please read the candidate notes on the University's pre-employment screening procedures at:

<https://www.jobs.ox.ac.uk/pre-employment-checks>

About the University of Oxford

Welcome to the University of Oxford. We aim to lead the world in research and education for the benefit of society both in the UK and globally. Oxford's researchers engage with academic, commercial and cultural partners across the world to stimulate high-quality research and enable innovation through a broad range of social, policy and economic impacts.

We believe our strengths lie both in empowering individuals and teams to address fundamental questions of global significance, while providing all our staff with a welcoming and inclusive workplace that enables everyone to develop and do their best work. Recognising that diversity is our strength, vital for innovation and creativity, we aspire to build a truly diverse community which values and respects every individual's unique contribution.

While we have long traditions of scholarship, we are also forward-looking, creative and cutting-edge. Oxford is one of Europe's most entrepreneurial universities and we rank first in the UK for university

spinouts, and in recent years we have spun out 15-20 new companies every year. We are also recognised as leaders in support for social enterprise.

Join us and you will find a unique, democratic and international community, a great range of staff benefits and access to a vibrant array of cultural activities in the beautiful city of Oxford.

For more information, please visit www.ox.ac.uk/about/organisation.

English Faculty

The Faculty of English is the largest English Department in the UK and has a very distinguished research record (awarded the top grade in the last two research assessment exercises). We have been ranked top in the QS World Rankings in the subject for the last eight years and our teaching has been graded 'Excellent' in every Quality Assurance review. The English Faculty's teaching and research covers literature in English from works in Old English of the 7th century to the current period of what has been called global English. The spread of historical expertise places the Faculty in a unique position to speak authoritatively about the long history of the literatures and languages of the British Isles, as well as the diaspora and interchange of literatures and languages that emerged from them. Students have opportunities to trace the development of literature from early manuscripts to current digital and hybrid forms; they benefit from a distinctive experience of close personal supervision with leading academics, in turn developing their own communities and identities as critics and researchers. The Faculty currently has 80 permanent members of academic staff, including 9 statutory Professors. This is in addition to a further 100 or so members teaching in the colleges and temporary members of staff. A list of Faculty members and their research interests is available on the website. For more information, please visit: www.english.ox.ac.uk.

Humanities Division

The Humanities Division is one of four academic divisions in the University of Oxford, each with a full-time Head and elected Board. The Humanities Division is distinctive for its depth and breadth. Its activity spans nine faculties, one School and two independent research institutes: the faculties of Classics; English; History; Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics; Medieval and Modern Languages; Music; Asian & Middle Eastern Studies; Philosophy; and Theology and Religion; the Ruskin School of Art; the Rothermere American Institute and the Voltaire Foundation. Interdisciplinary links within and beyond the University are strong, extending to the social sciences, medical sciences and the natural and physical sciences.

One of the largest centres for Humanities internationally, with over 800 members of academic and research staff, the Division offers world-class research and teaching, backed by the superb resources of the University's libraries and museums, including the famous Bodleian Library, with its 11 million volumes and priceless early book and manuscript collections, the Pitt Rivers Museum, the History of Science Museum and the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology. Such historic resources are linked to cutting-edge agendas in research and teaching, with an increasing emphasis on interdisciplinary study and digital Humanities.

The outstanding quality of Humanities research at Oxford is recognised globally. This reputation for research excellence contributes to the University coming top of several international rankings for Arts and Humanities, including the US News and World Report rankings and the QS World University Rankings by Subject. The Division's faculties are among the largest in the world, enabling Oxford to offer an education in Arts and Humanities unparalleled in its range of subjects, from music and fine art to ancient and modern languages.

The Division has responsibility for over 4,000 undergraduates (a third of the University's total undergraduate population), and for over 2,000 postgraduate students (over 1,100 doctoral students and some 900 Master's students). Twenty-nine undergraduate courses are offered in Humanities subjects, seven of which are offered jointly with the other academic divisions. The Doctoral and Master's programmes offered are distributed across all of the Division's faculties, along with a suite of Master's courses offered with the Social Sciences Division and a growing portfolio of Master's courses that draw

from across the Humanities. The Division is part of the Open-Oxford Cambridge AHRC Doctoral Training Partnership. The Humanities Division has embarked on a major building project on the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, supported by a £185 million gift to create the Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities.

The Schwarzman Centre

The teaching and study of the humanities is so important because it tells the story of what it means to be human - who we are, where we came from, and how our culture, literature and language have developed over time. With over 700 academic staff and 6,000 students, Oxford Humanities leads the world in the breadth and depth of subject coverage and the quality of teaching and research. But don't just take our word for it - the latest QS World University Rankings placed us at number one.

The new Humanities building will take our teaching, research and public engagement to new heights. For the first time in the University's history, seven humanities faculties are housed together along with a new library. These disciplines have been scattered in buildings across Oxford, but they are now united in a new building designed to encourage cross-disciplinary study and research. Academics in the building will work together to tackle some of the most pressing questions of our time. As well as a new Institute for Ethics in Artificial Intelligence, they will consider the environment and how society rebuilds after the pandemic.

Crucially, the building is open to the public, and we aim to bring research and performance in the arts and humanities to new audiences. There is dedicated space for schoolchildren to visit and engage with Oxford's researchers. There is exhibition space and three new performance venues for music, theatre, drama, dance, lectures and more. A new Cultural Programme will bring the world's leading performers and artists to Oxford. Our venues is open to regional cultural organisations, with whom Oxford researchers will strengthen partnerships.

For more information please visit: <http://www.humanities.ox.ac.uk/>

How to apply

Applications are made through our online recruitment portal. Information about how to apply is available on our Jobs website <https://www.jobs.ox.ac.uk/how-to-apply>.

Your application will be judged solely on the basis of how you demonstrate that you meet the selection criteria stated in the job description.

As part of your application, you will be asked to provide details of two referees and indicate whether we can contact them now.

You will be asked to upload a CV and a two-page supporting statement outlining previous research (e.g. doctoral project) and indicating how you meet the selection criteria for the post using examples of your skills and experience. This may include experience gained in employment, education, or during career breaks (such as time out to care for dependants).

Please upload all documents **as PDF files** with your name and the document type in the filename.

All applications must be received by **midday** UK time on the closing date stated in the online advertisement.

Information for internal candidates

If you currently work at the University, please note that:

- as part of the referencing process, we will contact your current department to confirm basic employment details including reason for leaving and information about your performance.
- although employees may hold multiple part-time posts, they may not hold more than the equivalent of a full-time post. If you are offered this post and accepting it would take you over the equivalent of full-time hours, you will be expected to resign from, or reduce hours in, your other posts(s) before starting work in the new post.

Information for priority candidates

A priority candidate is a University employee who is seeking redeployment because they have been advised that they are at risk of redundancy, or on grounds of ill-health/disability. Priority candidates are issued with a redeployment letter by their employing department(s).

If you are a priority candidate, please ensure that you attach your redeployment letter to your application (or email it to the contact address on the advert if the application form used for the vacancy does not allow attachments).

If you need help

Application FAQs, including technical troubleshooting advice is available at:

<https://staff.web.ox.ac.uk/recruitment-support-faqs>

Non-technical questions about this job should be addressed to the recruiting department directly at recruitment@ell.ox.ac.uk

To return to the online application at any stage, please go to: www.recruit.ox.ac.uk.

Please note that you will receive an automated email from our online recruitment portal to confirm receipt of your application. **Please check your spam/junk mail** if you do not receive this email.

Important information for candidates

Data Privacy

Please note that any personal data submitted to the University as part of the job application process will be processed in accordance with the GDPR and related UK data protection legislation. For further information, please see the University's Privacy Notice for Job Applicants at:

<https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/job-applicant-privacy-policy>. The University's Policy on Data Protection is available at: <https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/data-protection-policy>.

The University's policy on retirement

The University operates an Employer Justified Retirement Age (EJRA) for very senior research posts at **grade RSIV/D35 and clinical equivalents E62 and E82** of 30 September before the 70th birthday. The justification for this is explained at: <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/the-ejra>.

For **existing** employees on these grades, any employment beyond the retirement age is subject to approval through the procedures: <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/the-ejra>.

There is no normal or fixed age at which staff in posts at other grades have to retire. Staff at these grades may elect to retire in accordance with the rules of the applicable pension scheme, as may be amended from time to time.

Equal Opportunity

The University of Oxford is committed to equal opportunity, and to being a place where everyone belongs and is supported to succeed. We recognise how the diversity of our community enriches our ability to deliver on our academic mission.

We welcome applications from individuals from all backgrounds, including those under-represented within higher education. No applicant or members of staff shall be unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

Employment with the University and progression within employment will be determined according to personal merit and the application of criteria related to the duties and conditions of the post. In all cases, the primary consideration will be the ability to perform the job.

As stated in the University's Equality Policy and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan, our commitment to equality and diversity goes hand in hand with our commitment to academic freedom and free speech.

Benefits of working at the University

Employee benefits

University employees enjoy 38 days' paid holiday, generous pension schemes, flexible working options, support for [sustainable travel](#) and other discounts. Staff can also access a huge range of personal and professional development opportunities. See <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/staff-benefits>. Staff can access a huge range of personal and professional development opportunities. See <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/staff-benefits>

Employee Assistance Programme

As part of our wellbeing offering staff get free access to a confidential employee assistance programme, available 24/7 for 365 days a year. Find out more at <https://staff.admin.ox.ac.uk/thriving-at-oxford>

University Club and sports facilities

Membership of the University Club is free for University staff. It offers social, sporting, and hospitality facilities. Staff can also use the University Sports Centre on Iffley Road at discounted rates, including a fitness centre, powerlifting room, and swimming pool. See www.club.ox.ac.uk and <https://www.sport.ox.ac.uk/>.

Information for staff new to Oxford

Please see our Life in Oxford webpage for information on relocating to and settling into the Oxford area. The website offers valuable guidance, including information on where to find more details about housing, transportation, finances, healthcare, and other key aspects of living in Oxford and the surrounding region. See [Life in Oxford | Oxford University Jobs](#)

There is also a visa loan scheme to cover the costs of UK visa applications for staff and their dependants. See <https://staffimmigration.admin.ox.ac.uk/visa-loan-scheme>

Family-friendly benefits

We are a family-friendly employer with one of the most generous family leave schemes in the Higher Education sector (see <https://hr.web.ox.ac.uk/family-leave>). Our Childcare Services team provides guidance and support on childcare provision, and offers a range of high-quality childcare options at affordable prices for staff. In addition to 5 University nurseries, we partner with a number of local providers to offer in excess of 450 full time nursery places to our staff. Eligible parents are able to pay for childcare through salary sacrifice, further reducing costs. See <https://childcare.admin.ox.ac.uk/>.

Supporting disability and health-related issues (inc menopause)

We are committed to supporting members of staff with disabilities or long-term health conditions, including those experiencing negative effects of menopause. Information about the University's Staff Disability Advisor, is at <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/disability-support>. For information about how we support those going through menopause see <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/menopause-guidance>

Staff networks

The University has a number of staff networks including for research staff, BME staff, LGBT+ staff, disabled staff network and those going through menopause. Find out more at <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/networks>

The University of Oxford Newcomers' Club

The University of Oxford Newcomers' Club is run by volunteers that aims to assist the partners of new staff settle into Oxford, and provides them with an opportunity to meet people and make connections in the local area. See www.newcomers.ox.ac.uk.

Research staff

The Researcher Hub supports all researchers on fixed-term contracts. They aim to help you settle in comfortably, make connections, grow as a person, extend your research expertise and approach your next career step with confidence. Find out more <https://www.ox.ac.uk/research/support-researchers/researcher-hub>

Oxford's Research Staff Society is a collective voice for our researchers. They also organise social and professional networking activities for researchers. Find out more <https://www.ox.ac.uk/research/support-researchers/connecting-other-researchers/oxford-research-staff-society>