

John Ellerman Foundation seeks researcher for History Project

(3 minute read)

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Back in late March, in my blog titled '[Business as \(un\)usual](#)', I talked about our 'History Project' and how this was an important part of a range of initiatives we are working on to celebrate that it has been 50 years since the Foundation was set up in 1971 by our founder, Sir John Ellerman II.

In part the History Project aims to make an authoritative record of what has gone before, by building and preserving our own archival holdings. Perhaps most importantly though, it is an expression of our interest and commitment to learning, sharing and drawing on insights from our past, acknowledging these and using this to shape and reinforce our current identity as a funder of the arts, environment and social action, as well as into the future.

In the last 18 months we have worked with academics, historians and researchers to think through how to deliver our History Project. This next phase builds on the work we have been doing already in relation to developing our own archival holdings by acquiring physical material to add to the collection, and an oral history project that we commissioned in which interviews were conducted with former employees of the Ellerman family business, acquaintances, family members, and former Foundation Trustees and Directors. Most recently, in 2020 the [UK Philanthropy Archive](#) based at the University of Kent supported us with our acquisition and translation of over 200 letters written by our founder that were sent to us in late 2019 by colleagues in South Africa.

Earlier this month we launched our search for a History Project researcher, by publishing to [our website](#), as well as announcing on [Twitter](#) a request for proposals for this paid 12-month role. Researcher is a catch all term really, as those applying could be an academic, historian or author. Having commissioned mini projects on an ad-hoc basis previously, we know that there is a huge appetite for this kind of work and talented people out there to do it, which is an exciting prospect for us and this phase of the History Project.

The work outlined in the request for proposal is very much built on trust, transparency and collaboration. It will not only unify what we already know about our history but create an open forum in which to share information, ideas and skills. The commissioned researcher will receive support from staff and Trustees, and a Project Advisory Group that we will set up to assist with project managing this area of work.

The request for proposals document makes clear the areas that we would like the researcher to interrogate, such as the business interests of Sir John Ellerman I and II, investments, strategy and how they conducted their business activities and ethics. However, this is very much a project brief that can be refined and/or diversified by the researcher, in partnership with us.

We are excited to be launching this search and deep dive into our history now, at a time when many other philanthropic foundations like us want to learn more about the origins of our endowment. We look forward to hearing from anyone who would like to submit a proposal. If you have questions drop me a line at recruitment@ellerman.org.uk, and of course we look forward to sharing the findings with you when the time comes.