



## **Building an Empire: Corporate Vision & the Global Geographies of Infrastructure**

### **Fully-funded AHRC PhD studentship**

Applications are invited for an AHRC-funded PhD studentship to work on the company and photographic archives of the Pearson engineering firm, one of Britain's most powerful global corporations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This studentship is one of eight PhD awards made by the newly-established Collaborative Doctoral Partnership managed by the Science Museum Group. The project will be supervised by Dr Innes M. Keighren & Prof Felix Driver (Royal Holloway) and David Rooney & Tilly Blyth (Science Museum, London). The studentship, which is funded for three years full-time equivalent, will be available from September 2013.

### **The Studentship**

The project focuses on one of the richest under-explored collections in the Science Museum archives, associated with the global activities of the Pearson company which was involved in major infrastructure projects around the world, from tunnels and harbours to waterworks, railways and oil refineries. The archive includes 150 albums of photographs of industrial sites in Britain, Europe, Mexico, Brazil, and the Middle East, dating from the 1880s to the 1930s, accompanied by extensive archival records including contracts, negotiations and correspondence between the firm and its clients. The research will involve consideration of the organisational structure of the company, and the role of local knowledge in its increasingly globalised operations; and the role of photography in the internal management and public relations of the company.

The collection presents many possible research foci, including the visualisation of engineering technology and landscape (the numerous images of docks, tunnels, and panoramas), the social history of labour (as evident in depictions of the firm's British and local workforces) and the connections between the public and domestic lives of businessmen. Key questions might include: to what extent does the Pearson collection reflect a distinctive company vision of the world? By what means did the company actually operate as a global business? How was knowledge and expertise managed and circulated within the company? By what process were company photographs actually commissioned and produced, and what were their purposes? How might such collections be used today, both within company histories and beyond them? Through a combination of archival research and visual analysis, the research will exploit the rich and varied collections of the Pearson firm to address wider questions to do with the knowledge economy of transnational business and the role of photography in the documentation, promotion, and preservation of work done at a geographical distance.

### **How to Apply**

Applicants should have a good undergraduate degree in history, geography, or other relevant discipline, and will need to satisfy AHRC academic and residency eligibility criteria including the requirement that candidates should normally have or be studying for a Masters or equivalent postgraduate qualification. Preference may be given to

applicants with prior experience in working with business archives and/or photographic archives, though others are encouraged to apply.

Applicants should submit a curriculum vitae and a brief letter outlining qualifications for the studentship in a single Word document of no more than three pages in length. The names and contact details of two academic referees should also be supplied. Applications should be sent to [innes.keighren@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:innes.keighren@rhul.ac.uk) no later than **5 June 2013**.

Interviews are scheduled to be held in the Science Museum, London, on the morning of **17 June 2013**.

For further information concerning the project, please contact Innes Keighren ([innes.keighren@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:innes.keighren@rhul.ac.uk)).