

## Strategic and Research Plan 2020-25



**The British School at Rome is a centre of interdisciplinary research excellence, supporting the full range of arts, humanities and social sciences.** We have built up an environment for work of international standing and impact from Britain and the Commonwealth, a bridge into the intellectual and cultural heart of Rome and Italy, and a key vantage-point for the understanding of the Mediterranean as a whole.

The BSR promotes:

- residential awards for artists, both visual and creative, and architects
- residential awards for research in the archaeology, history, art history, society and culture of Italy and the Mediterranean
- a multidisciplinary programme of lectures and conferences
- internationally collaborative research projects, including archaeological excavation and fieldwork
- a specialist research library and exceptionally rich archive
- monograph publications of research and our highly rated journal, *Papers of the British School at Rome*
- the curation of exhibitions
- specialist taught courses.

The BSR's vision is:

- The inspiration and generation of creative research and practice
- A transformative intellectual experience
- World-class and socially engaged practice and research, both within the context of Rome and beyond
- Interdisciplinary, supportive, welcoming, accessible, challenging values, which promote equality, inclusion and diversity
- The exploration of new avenues and directions, in ways that remain coherent with our mission, resources, and networks.

The BSR is the UK's largest-scale research institution located inside the EU which is independent of an HEI. It is therefore of even greater importance now that Brexit has happened: **it is the UK's front door in Europe for Fine Arts, Humanities, and Social Science (AHSS)**. It is accredited as a research institution eligible for ERC funding. We aim to develop our international role systematically, through strengthening research collaborations with UK HEIs, and to act as a bridge to EU universities and research bodies, and to creative arts foundations. **Our future lies in collaborations, in every part of AHSS**. We will also continue to act as a bridgehead, through our historic links, with the Commonwealth. We will offer a gateway to sustain and further develop international collaboration in research, innovation and the creative industries. **The BSR's geographical focus is not solely on Italy, but covers a broad, western Mediterranean and north African range, and now looks more widely across Europe as well.**

But the BSR is located in Italy's capital city too, and this is important. Rome transcends its status as the centre of a nation. It is the home of a second nation state, the Vatican City, and is the headquarters for various United Nations Agencies (FAO, IFCA, WFP, for example). It is also the home of the research and fine-arts academies of three dozen other countries, as well as the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) and the European Space Agency Centre for Earth Observation. The BSR has worked with all these bodies and agencies, on subjects ranging from cultural heritage in war zones to climate change, and will continue to do so.

The BSR's Research Strategy is informed by our assessment of the contribution we make, and the value we can add, to the UK government's strategic priorities in research and the creative sector. As an institution that has always combined research and practice, in a vibrant, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary community, **we are ideally placed to deliver on the UK's strategic priorities in research and innovation** through our support for and development of the most talented scholars of the art, history and culture of the Mediterranean from prehistory to the present day, of analysts of the social challenges facing Europe and the Mediterranean, and of contemporary architects, artists and curators. Our aim is to act as a catalyst for academic research and creative practice through engagement with Mediterranean, Italian and Rome-based international agencies to enhance connectivity, partnership and collaboration for UK and Commonwealth researchers and creative artists. Our historic strength in the fields of Humanities and Social Sciences and Visual Art and Architecture means that we have always worked as an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary institution, engaging with a wide variety of media.

The BSR is a leader. Among other aspects of this, discussed below, our Library leads the URBiS consortium of 23 Rome-based European research institutes with over 2.5 million records. In Britain, two former Faculty members were appointed Chairs of sub-panels for REF2021. A former Director, Christopher Smith, has moved on to being CEO of the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Several Turner Prize winners have been drawn from the ranks of our recent visual art and architecture award-holders.

The BSR thus has a strong record of inspiring creative research through its awards and its own research activities. We are profoundly interdisciplinary, richly diverse and fundamentally international. We are a leader in the cultural and academic networks of

Rome, which as a physical centre — with far-reaching influence —, and through its enormous symbolic capital, remains challenging and profoundly relevant.

**For 2015-20, our aims for building our research excellence were the following:**

1. the BSR will continue to be the UK's leading centre of academic research excellence and research-led practice in Roman and Italian studies from prehistory to the modern day, and across the visual arts and architecture
2. the BSR will continue to bring the whole range of these disciplines together by emphasising not only the principle, but also the practice, of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary exchange
3. the BSR will seek, in particular, to support early-career, mid-career and senior researchers and practitioners through its own resources and through building networks and links in Rome, Italy and beyond
4. the BSR will continue to make its award-holders the central focus of its activities
5. the BSR will seek sufficient financial autonomy to be able to maintain a diverse range of research areas and activities, and to launch new projects
6. the BSR will maintain its financial and operational efficiency to ensure that its staff and residence are fit for the purposes of supporting the highest quality of research and practice.
7. the BSR will look to build approved strategic partnerships with other academic and cultural institutions for research projects
8. the BSR's research will engage with broader UK and European research agenda
9. BSR awards will be made through competitive processes and with the oversight and appropriate engagement of the Faculties.

**We fulfilled these; we will continue all of them; but it is also now time to move on.**

The BSR will build on its outstanding research and support for exceptional individuals and projects to raise its profile, both in the UK and internationally, as a unique laboratory for AHSS at the heart of Rome. Whilst we will always prize our physical presence in Rome, we will also, as the UK's AHSS front door in Europe, focus attention on our values and achievements in the sharing of ideas and in the enrichment and transformation of the lives and futures of practitioners and researchers for the benefit of the UK, the Commonwealth, and the rest of the world. This will be achieved inside available resources, but using new resources as they become available to enhance our role.

As a general framing:

- **We will continue to attract and transform the very best of the UK and Commonwealth's early career academics and creative talents in an international context.** As members of a vibrant and non-hierarchical interdisciplinary residential community that promotes dialogue and experimentation in a supportive environment, we will provide them with the necessary resources and support throughout their careers.
- We will work to offer opportunities to the very best UK and Commonwealth talent, through training in skills and methods, targeted courses, and international PhD student placement opportunities. We will extend our collaboration with UK-based Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTPs), and will offer placements to a wider range of Commonwealth countries.

- **We will continue also to attract scholars at mid- and senior career stage**, to allow them to undertake their own work, but also to enrich the community in general, including the nurturing of the talent of younger scholars and artists.
- We will work to showcase the best of UK and Commonwealth talent through a dynamic programme of public events, lectures, conferences, exhibitions, workshops, installations and performances, both real and virtual, which we will relay through social media platforms. We will maintain an online presence for our lecture series even when we reopen our lecture theatre, for our online audiences are often ten times those we had up to 2020. We will act, wherever is appropriate, in conjunction with Rome's universities and foreign academies, and with partner UK agencies in Italy.
- When junior and senior scholars and artists return to the UK, we will help them to bring the BSR's work to the attention of a UK audience, including government, through events and publications.
- **We will work to develop UK and Commonwealth talent** through mobilising our extensive alumni base, which is drawn from a broad range of sector leaders in academia, the cultural industries and museum and gallery sector, and the diplomatic and political realms.
- We will consider all alternatives in order to increase our capacity on site for both research and practice. This might be through a very large-scale multi-million-pound building programme; if we did that, it could create additional capacity for library and archive resources, new studio and exhibition spaces, a special collections facility and additional capacity and improvements in the residency. We will however look hard at smaller-scale and more practicable solutions as well, to improve the facilities we can offer to our residents and award-holders, in particular to provide family accommodation. We will anyway work to get development support to make one or the other possible.
- **We will work to increase our bilateral activity as a broker** in the Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums sector (GLAM), between cultural partners in Italy and the UK.
- We will work to provide **a unique European platform for the work of UK HEIs** across the humanities, arts and social sciences, including to help them more effectively broker targeted research programmes such as the Open World Research Initiative (OWRI) and the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF), or their successors, establishing dialogue with Rome-based global and European agencies.
- We will work to host seminars and conferences that bring other UK institutions in Rome, extending from the Embassy outwards, together with researchers and representatives of UK and Italian-based HEIs and NGOs working on issues of (among others) **climate change, migration, radicalisation, and integration**. We are an important arm of the UK's cultural diplomacy, and, together with the Embassy, we will develop our role here.
- We will work to extend our existing co-operation and collaboration with Italian national cultural agencies concerned with **the curation and conservation of cultural heritage** both in Italy – outside as well as inside Rome itself – and elsewhere in the Mediterranean: ICCROM, the Istituto Superiore per la Conservazione ed il Restauro (ISCR) and the Istituto Centrale per il Restauro e la Conservazione del Patrimonio Archivistico e Librario (ICRCPAL).
- **We will work to maintain our pre-eminence as innovators and leaders** in the URBiS consortium of Roman research libraries. We have expanded our digital

platform for archival and special collections material, and we will work to develop and increase the services we offer, including our digital collections.

- We will work to maintain and enhance **our international pre-eminence in the field of archaeological research**, global fieldwork, and European grant capture, helping build key new collaborations with European and international research institutions.
- We will work with the British Council and other stakeholders to further develop a UK/Italy visual arts, architecture and design collaboration; we are in talks, among others, with the Palazzo Butera in Palermo and the Museum of Loss and Renewal, located in Collemacchia in the Italian Appennines.
- We will work to publish and disseminate our research and practice as widely as possible to ensure its impact through our partnership with Cambridge University Press, both in the journal *Papers of the British School at Rome* and the British School at Rome Studies series, in addition to other traditional and social media channels.
- **We will foster collaboration with the other BIRIs, not least in the sphere of Digital Humanities and a collaborative Archives project**, but also, as we have already begun to do, in other areas of AHSS research. This will be fundamental for developing our eligibility for IRO status.

**In the immediate future, we will work to develop our activities in five specific areas**, which are set out here in alphabetical order. We will add a renewed focus on a sixth, **Architecture**, which has long been one of our core strengths, as soon as funding permits.

**Archaeology.** We have a 70-year-old tradition of cutting-edge archaeological research, with major internationally renowned projects such as the South Etruria Survey, San Vincenzo al Volturno, Herculaneum Conservation Project, the Middle Tiber Valley, Portus, and now the Lateran project (RomeTrans), all closely associated with the BSR. We have always been a leading light in the use of technical skills for archaeology; at the moment, for example, we lead in Italy in the use of geophysics and geo-radar. We have a new Assistant Director Archaeology, starting in 2021, Dr Emlyn Dodd, an expert in the wine production of the Roman empire; he will develop a new project on Falernian wine, which was produced between Rome and Naples. We also, building on our close links to Rome's three main universities, plan to develop a large-scale project on Rome and its wider hinterland, which will expand on our expertise on the lands north of Rome (South Etruria/Middle Tiber) and south (Portus/Ostia, and now the Agro Falerno), and will aim to extend from the pre-Roman through to the medieval period. These projects are appropriate for ERC grants.

**Art.** One of our major resources is our award-holders in Fine Art and Architecture, and our former award-holders as well, many of whom have gone far in their careers. We have a large-scale set of records of their work, including engravings, which in itself is a major art-historical resource. We are building research connections with museums and galleries in Rome; this stems from common interests in art and gender, problematic heritage, and methods of display and interpretation. We will build on our connections with them, to deepen the experience and further the careers of our award-holders, but also to locate ourselves even more tightly inside the current artistic scene in Rome.

**The BIRIs.** We are in strong support of current plans to create a structure which links all the British International Research Institutes (BIRIs) together, to make us all stronger, and

one of the aims of this is to make a compelling claim to IRO status which will enable us to access UK grant funding. In particular, the BSR's archival holdings are matched by those of the other BIRIs, many of which – Amman/Jerusalem, Ankara, Athens – are also located in the Mediterranean; they are even more valuable when put together, as in the digitisation grant bids which we are already developing, and will develop still further.

**Humanities and Social Science.** Here too our award-holders and Research fellows are a crucial resource, and the vibrancy of the community, the capacity which is offered for daily brainstorming, is one of the elements which makes the BSR such an intellectually exciting place to be. We intend to build on this, too, in our grant and funding capture. We are developing links with several UK HEIs to aid us with this, including, as a major first step, an agreement with Newcastle University to fund research-grant support for us. And we are alert to every opportunity for us to use our links to government, international agencies and universities to allow us to further the strategic aims of the UK and its own research bodies in facing, and facing down, the social and political challenges of the present-day world. As stated earlier, we are the UK's front door into Europe in AHSS, and this front door will be kept fully open.

**Library/Archive.** The BSR Archive documents, among other data but particularly, the archives and photographs of early BSR Directors such as Thomas Ashby, Eugenie Strong and John Ward-Perkins, and their associates, plus those of the major BSR archaeological projects carried out since the Second World War; their annotated books are in the Library too. In addition, in our Library Special Collections, we have the work of even earlier travellers, which is the focus of substantial current research. The Archive is a major resource for the history of the British in the Mediterranean in the first half of the century and earlier; it is also a unique resource for any Mediterranean cultural heritage project which is dealing with areas whose ancient buildings have been destroyed in the last century. We aim to digitise the whole set, and again we aim to get grants to fund this; and we will develop more research to valorise the Special Collections of the Library.

*Note:* none of the above refers to the COVID pandemic. The pandemic affected our residency and our finances, as it did all other residence-based bodies across the world, but it did not affect our events, our research, and our political and cultural brokering – or our ambition and proactivity. Indeed, it encouraged us in one important way: our lectures, which are now virtual, and which will continue in the future to be a hybrid of real life and virtual, are now heard all over the world. We will carry on in the future, unaffected by this detail of the past.

**Chris Wickham 24.2.21**