

## **CBRL Strategic Research Plan 2011-15**

### **Summary and Recommendations**

CBRL aims to promote, facilitate, sponsor and carry out high-quality research in the range of subjects supported by the British Academy throughout the countries of the Levant: Cyprus, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. By developing our networks in the UK, regionally, and internationally we make a significant impact, enhancing the critical mass of scholars working together and fostering multi-disciplinary approaches. Much research is only possible through our presence, networks, and official contacts in the region which enormously improve the efficiency and value for money of British research in the region, as well as enabling it to be richer and deeper through better local engagement.

We believe that research in contemporary Middle East Studies is at a critical juncture, both in terms of wider international politics and the narrower university environment. As more and more demands are made on scholars in the name of applied policy, it is essential that critically engaged researchers of the contemporary Middle East evaluate the future directions of the field. CBRL has therefore undertaken a review of research in contemporary studies (Annex One), the results of which are incorporated here. We make a number of key recommendations regarding how research in the Middle East should be pursued to ensure that the combined goals of academic integrity and independence are maintained to produce top quality research, while at the same time ensuring that the research is seen as relevant and intelligible to wider UK interests; public, governmental and NGO. CBRL will play a proactive role in developing research strategies and in disseminating research results to academic, government and public audiences.

Our Research Strategy is based firmly within the British Academy's own report on "Punching our weight: the humanities and social sciences in public policy making" (2008), in particular the statement made by Sir Alan Wilson in his preface to the report:

"The challenges that confront public policy makers are growing in complexity. They require a sophisticated and far-sighted approach, which can anticipate, and respond to, potential long-term risks and opportunities. Humanities and social science research is well placed to help policy makers respond to these developments. However, short-term political pressures often work against policy makers' efforts to prepare for future uncertainties. There needs to be greater recognition of the importance of increasing the stock of useful knowledge from a wide range of relevant academic sources, in order to enable the UK to respond better to these developments."

A central tenet of our Strategy is that our academic remit is to resist short-term approaches, and ensure our research is soundly based within regional contexts and is conducted by experts who have over the long-term built up a well-grounded empirical knowledge of the area. This applies to all areas of our research. We believe that research can be most productively developed if it can be built into a wider structure with long term themes; to this end we have developed one broad Strategic Research Initiative, and a number of key Research Themes. These have grown out of our previous Research Strategy, becoming increasingly focussed over time.

### **Recommendations:**

1. A recognition of the crucial role that the British Academy and the CBRL can play as bodies that encourage independent academic research.
2. A recognition of the importance of language training, not as an additional 'add on', but as a key part of all research.
3. A recognition of the importance of fine grained empirical research, whatever its subject, which necessarily takes time.
4. A recognition of the importance of closer collaboration between academics based in the Middle East and the UK, fostered through strong research institutions in the region.
5. The need to plan research impact as well as research design.

### **Aims and Objectives**

In promoting, sponsoring and carrying out research, the CBRL has the following aims and objectives:

*Aim 1:* To continue to broaden the scope of CBRL's support for inter-disciplinary projects and contemporary research projects, while recognizing its traditional strengths in archaeology, architectural history and history, by

- Maintaining a broad range of disciplines on our committee of management, divided approximately 50-50 between research on the contemporary Levant and the past.
- Maintaining a broad range of disciplines among directly employed research staff.
- Employing a team of research-active post-doctoral staff, with annual research leave and occasional sabbatical leave.
- Developing links to scientific disciplines, especially where there are shared interests, as with meteorologists, physical geographers and hydrologists working on climate change.

*Aim 2:* CBRL should seek to foster young researchers, helping them to gain on the ground experience in the region and to promote language studies.

- Continuing to offer scholarships to postdoctoral and postgraduate researchers, including those enrolled in postgraduate courses and research (Amman and Jerusalem Scholars)
- Continuing to offer post-doctoral fellowships (Amman and Jerusalem Senior Visiting Fellows) and doctoral fellowships (Junior Visiting Fellows).
- Continuing to offer *travel grants* to research students and other scholars who wish to pursue a piece of original research in the Levant
- Awarding small *pilot study* grants to enable established scholars to develop applications for major funding from the British Academy and Research Councils
- Provide high quality affordable Arabic language training in Amman through the Qasid language centre.

*Aim 3:* CBRL should continue to develop networks within the region, working to strengthen research (especially in the social sciences) and to increase the level of collaboration with the local academic communities and institutes of other European countries working in the Levant, by

- Organizing joint seminars in Amman, Jerusalem and Damascus
- Encouraging UK researchers to work with local partners, providing contacts and introductions where required, and resources to assist the development of such links
- Appointing local Honorary Fellows
- Exploring the possibilities for joint research projects with other EU countries and the host countries, which would then attract EU funding and working with EU outreach programmes
- Maintaining and developing a series of research resources, including the libraries and reference collections, which are made open to the local research communities.
- CBRL should use the networks established to help connect UK scholars to the local academic community, especially postgraduate students or researchers developing a new interest in the region, who have not already established their own networks. CBRL should encourage the development of wider links and opportunities for new research and collaboration.

*Aim 4:* CBRL should continue and expand its work in facilitating connections for UK based students and academics, and working to bring the research communities together:

- Requiring all employed research staff to be affiliated in some way to a UK academic institution
- Ensuring that a broad spread of UK institutions is represented on the committee of management
- Making joint funding proposals with UK institutions
- Working in collaboration with other British Schools and Institutes.
- Working closely with UK bodies such as university departments and BRISMES and seeking to encourage cross-disciplinary research
- UK connections should be enhanced through working with the British Academy's Middle Eastern Panel, combining with BRISMES on events, working with and supporting UK based research, in terms of small scale funding, especially to provide pump-priming of new and innovative initiatives, through the affiliation of larger research projects funded by UK research councils and the British Academy, and the provision of senior visiting research fellowships. Library provision for visiting scholars should be maintained.

*Aim 5:* To ensure support for high-quality and innovative research projects with a focus on excellence, by

- Developing research strategies for the region in partnership with other members of the academic community
- Holding or supporting research meetings both within the region and in the UK.
- Appointing staff to research posts on the basis of a fair, open and transparent procedure as set out in the CBRL Appointments Manual

- Liaising closely with the BA and Research Councils with regard to other UK-sponsored scholars working in the Levant

*Aim 6:* To facilitate high-quality research through the maintenance of well-founded research centres and field bases, by

- Levying a financial contribution to the maintenance of research centres from projects and individual users
- Actively seeking external sponsorship of facilities, in addition to that provided by the BASIS annual grant-in-aid
- Maintaining the necessary research facilities, including libraries, laboratories, and field equipment
- Enhancing social science library resources and making these available to local researchers.

*Aim 7:* To disseminate information about British research in the region to scholars and to the wider public at home and abroad, by

- Organizing lectures in London and elsewhere in the UK
- Providing suitable publication outlets (including web based material)
- Publishing research reports, including the results of backlog projects
- Organizing lectures and seminars in Jerusalem, Amman and Damascus
- Supporting the attendance of CBRL research staff at international conferences
- Participating in exhibitions, television documentaries, and other showcase events
- Funding research travel to the UK by local academics
- Providing grants or commissions to bring research to publication
- Ensuring that government bodies can realise the benefits of academic research, by working with embassies and the British Council in the region, and FCO in the UK.
- Contributing to UK agency sponsored meetings, providing complementary or alternative views and information.

### **Strategic Research Initiative: *Exploring Identities in the Levant***

CBRL has one major Strategic Research Initiative, *Exploring Identities in the Levant*. This combines elements from many of our key research themes. CBRL's main role is to provide a research network, linking people working in different disciplines, facilitating research, establishing local and regional academic links, sponsoring and organising meetings. The theme is specifically linked to the UK Government *Science and Innovation Investment Framework 2004-2014* multidisciplinary research theme of identities and cultures. The Framework document identifies that within this theme "There is a need to develop a more sustained and cohesive programme, building research capacity and new intellectual strategies and approaches drawing leading researchers into interdisciplinary programmes". CBRL's multidisciplinary interests and the complex nature of identity in the Levant (and related migrant populations in the UK) make us ideally placed to support this research theme incorporating identity, migration, diasporas, culture and language (Annex Two).

### **Key Research Themes**

Within the very broad spread of academic disciplines supported, CBRL has identified a number of key research interests. These initially grew out of existing research programmes, but have developed in light of UK academic demands and emerging priorities. The list will be reviewed annually by the CBRL Research Committee. Although there will be some scope for research outwith this list (*Travel Grants*), all research support will be considered within this framework.

- a) The origins, development and practice of economic and social strategies in the Middle East from earliest times to the modern day.
- b) Long-term landscape, environment and climate change studies, from the past through to predictive models for future developments, including working with natural science research.
- c) The interface between East and West.
- d) The investigation of multiple identities in the Middle East.
- e) The diachronic and synchronic study of the use of language and the written record in Middle Eastern society.

These themes are all aspects of the continuing broad importance of the Levant to research. Details regarding each theme and the projects currently supported are provided in Annex Three. Research projects may fall within several themes, for example the development of cultural heritage tourism is likely to be relevant to themes (c) and (d). Projects relating to water use and availability may relate to themes (a) and (b).

## **CBRL Funding of Research**

CBRL intends to maintain a broad and highly active engagement in this research, but we recognise that the bulk of funding for this research will come from such sources as the British Academy, the AHRC, the ESRC and other bodies such as the Leverhulme Trust, and that only a small proportion will be directly funded by CBRL. By carefully targeting our resources we believe we will still be able to make a significant impact. The CBRL provides funding to research projects by means of awards made available from the funds that it receives from the BA through its grant-in-aid. At present CBRL has no other source of general research funding, although it manages certain restricted funds related to specific projects, including Ancient Jerusalem, inherited from the former British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, and elements of AHRC funding in the Wadi Faynan 16 Excavation project. A vital part of our work is to support British Universities where the bulk of research is based, however a key aspect of CBRL's research funding is the employment of research-active staff to manage its facilities, support research, and to conduct their own research, at present comprising five post-doctoral and two postgraduate individuals. This has enabled us to direct a significant widening of the disciplines covered, with only two staff members currently being archaeologists, and the range of disciplines covered by recent staff members now having included anthropology, archaeology, architectural history, classics, human geography, linguistics, modern history, politics, religious history, and sociology. We have opened our Scholar posts to post-doctoral candidates and combined them with language training.

The CBRL will not award grants from the funding that it receives from the BA on the basis of an open competition in 'responsive mode', but will direct applicants to apply directly to the BA, ESRC and AHRC. Nor will CBRL use its research funds to supplement the research budgets of projects already receiving funding from the BA, AHRC or ESRC. Instead CBRL will seek to use the research funding that it receives from public sources in ways that complement the BA, AHRC and ESRC research programmes, while being consistent with its declared aims as a charity.

All projects awarded research funding are subsequently regarded as CBRL-affiliated projects and as such receive all the support and benefits of 'in house' projects. It is also possible for projects that receive no financial support from CBRL to apply for CBRL affiliation and thus obtain the same benefits (other than funding). This includes all BA, AHRC and ESRC funded projects, which may now obtain CBRL affiliation by a streamlined procedure. The facilitation of non-CBRL funded projects is a key aspect of our strategy, as clearly the number of projects directly managed or funded by CBRL will always be small compared to the volume of research activity in the Levant.

### *CBRL projects:*

Apart from projects in which CBRL staff are directly involved, the CBRL at present has only four in-house projects, including the publication of excavations undertaken by the former BSAJ at Jezreel,; the Ancient Jerusalem Project, which employs a researcher to complete the final publication of the late Dame Kathleen Kenyon's excavations; and the former 'flagship' projects of Wadi Faynan and Homs Region (including the publication of Tell Nebi Mend). The first phase of Faynan projects are now published and new work has been funded by the AHRC (now in post fieldwork mode) and Leverhulme Trust (results now in press). Two post-doctoral researchers have been commissioned to see through the final publication of Professor Peter Parr's excavations at Tell Nebi Mend, managed by the Director in liaison with Professor Parr. CBRL may, from time to time, decide that new projects should be established or considered as CBRL projects.

### *Pilot Studies:*

CBRL will provide support for researchers undertaking initial exploratory work or a feasibility study with a view to preparing an application for major funding from a Research Council or the British Academy in due course. Awards under either heading may be used to cover travel, round tables, seminars, or initial exploratory fieldwork. In addition CBRL will assist such feasibility studies through the provision of its facilities and in establishing local contacts. To be eligible under this scheme, a project must involve an element of travel to (or from) the Middle East.

### *Visiting Fellowships:*

These are available to enable established scholars to spend a period of between 3 and 9 months attached to the British Institutes in Amman and Damascus, or the Kenyon Institute in Jerusalem, in order to undertake a piece of research. Under the terms of the fellowship, CBRL provides a return air fare from the UK, accommodation at the Institute concerned (with a minimum of one month's residence in the institute) and a paid allowance for food. Salaries, research expenses, and teaching-replacement costs are not covered by the award, but a fellowship may be held in conjunction with a BA or Research Council award that does cover such costs (such as a research fellowship or readership), so long it does not also cover travel, food or accommodation. The fellowships comprise Senior Visiting Fellowships intended for post-doctoral researchers and Junior Visiting Fellowships, intended for doctoral researchers. The scheme has been modified to reduce

the proportion of time spent in the institute following analysis of requests for support from scholars, especially social scientists, for whom it was important to spend several months embedded within a community.

#### *Travel grants:*

These are small grants (up to £800 per application) to fund the basic costs of individual travel for the purpose of research. Such grants are not awarded to assist individuals to join a project when that could be seen as a hidden subsidy to the project in question, nor are they available when the principal reason for travel is training, as opposed to research.

#### *Project completion funds:*

CBRL has almost completed publication of the 'back-log' projects it has taken responsibility for. We recognise that there may be a continuing need to occasionally provide limited funding to assist in bringing a piece of research to publication. Much support can be provided through our provision of outlets for publication, but CBRL will allow bids for support where there are outstanding tasks that need to be completed and where no other funding is available to cover these.

All of the above methods of funding are open to applications which are submitted annually. To ensure that the highest quality research can be supported, all applications are submitted to a single panel which may allocate research funds between the above categories.

#### *Honorary Fellowships*

CBRL awards non-stipendiary Honorary Fellowships. Honorary Fellows are appointed to enhance the academic standing of the CBRL through the conduct and publication of research of high quality within the arts and humanities. They receive access to research facilities and work space in CBRL institutions. Honorary Fellows play an active role in the life of CBRL's overseas institutes, through participation in the academic life of these establishments. Honorary Fellowships are often awarded to individuals who do not have an institutional affiliation. Applications may be made throughout the year.

The CBRL overseas institutes also appoint Honorary Fellows, these are from the local academic community, and are intended to acknowledge contributions to CBRL research projects and events, as well as enrich the academic community at each institute.

CBRL no longer makes special provision to provide research funding for its own staff, as the BA has indicated that CBRL staff will now be considered eligible for BA research funding. CBRL staff may apply for funding from CBRL on the same basis as any other eligible scholars. This position is now under review as the BA reduces its research project funding.

### **Conference and Outreach funding**

CBRL runs lectures, seminars, workshops and conferences in London, Amman, Jerusalem, and soon Damascus, as well as occasional meetings elsewhere. Most of these are CBRL initiatives but CBRL also invites formal applications for support for conferences, exhibitions, or other forms of outreach to be made to the full Committee twice a year. (Programme details are provided on our website and in supporting bid documents to forms B & C.)

### **Dissemination of Information**

The CBRL places great importance on the prompt publication of research results. We will continue to produce our refereed journal *Levant*, now with a commercial publisher and being published as an e-journal. We have moved to two issues a year to give scope to broaden the range of articles produced to fully reflect the range of research we conduct, while maintaining our profile within archaeology. The Levant Supplementary Series continues to focus on archaeology and other historical subjects, and we have now signed an agreement with Routledge to develop joint publications to provide a high profile outlet for CBRL supported research on the contemporary Levant. Our Bulletin (also now produced by our commercial publisher and on-line) is now our journal of record, providing summary reports on the full range of work we are supporting.

This Research Plan should be read with reference to CBRL's Corporate Plan.