

Call for Applications for a Postdoctoral Fellowship in History Université libre de Bruxelles

Working Conditions

- Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) – “in international mobility”
- Field: History (medieval history or contemporary history)
- Duration: 9 months – October 2025 to June 2026
- Full-time position, in person
- Work environment: sociAMM (Histoire, Arts, Cultures des Sociétés Anciennes, Médiévales et Modernes); Ratio DH (research centre specialised in Digital Humanities, part of the Maison des Sciences Humaines)
- Amount of the fellowship: €3,116.45 net minimum /month

Description of the project

The selected candidate will carry out postdoctoral research as part of the “Action Blanche” project called ‘*De main de maître. Vers une transcription automatique des archives de l’historien Henri Pirenne et leur analyse ‘génétique’ et intellectuelle*’, led by Sébastien de Valeriola (ULB, Faculté de Lettres, Traduction et Communication, Ratio DH) and Alexis Wilkin (ULB, Faculté de Philosophie et Sciences sociales, sociAMM).

This project has two main objectives:

- To develop an HTR (Handwritten Text Recognition) model capable of reading the handwriting of the Belgian historian Henri Pirenne (1862-1935), in order to automatically transcribe handwritten documents from the Henri Pirenne Archives held at the ULB. This work is being carried out in close collaboration with ULB’s Department of Libraries and Scientific Information.
- By applying text-mining tools to the transcriptions that will have been obtained, to conduct an ‘intellectual genetic’ analysis of one of the major works of Henri Pirenne: *Mahomet et Charlemagne*.

Job & Role Description

This postdoctoral position, as part of the project ‘*De main de maître*’, will be carried out at the ULB, on the Solbosch campus in Brussels, for 9 months, under the supervision of Sébastien de Valeriola (LTC Faculty, Ratio DH) and Alexis Wilkin (PhiSoc Faculty, sociAMM). Remote work will not be possible (a dedicated workstation will be provided on site).

The research will focus on the second objective, namely the ‘intellectual genetic’ analysis of *Mahomet et Charlemagne*. Thanks to the first transcription phase of the project, the postdoctoral researcher will have at their disposal the various versions of Pirenne’s *Mahomet et Charlemagne* (from its first version as an article to the manuscript that was not finalised before Pirenne’s death), preparatory reading notes and manuscripts of his *Histoire de l’Europe*, as well as some older archives that will allow to examine the possible origins of Pirenne’s ideas before the First World War. By applying text-mining tools, the aim will be to study the genesis and evolution of the theory as presented in the successive versions of *Mahomet et Charlemagne*. The successful candidate will also be responsible for organising a seminar on the results of the ‘*De main de maître*’ project and for publishing a paper on the results of the ‘intellectual genetic’ analysis of *Mahomet et Charlemagne*.

The selected candidate will participate in the activities of [sociAMM](#) and [Ratio DH](#). These combined work environments will ensure the researcher’s access to diverse areas of expertise relevant to the completion of the project for which he/she will be responsible.

Required Profile

Degree

- PhD degree in History (medieval history or contemporary history). Any other assimilated or similar disciplinary field will be evaluated by the selection committee.

Main Skills

- Good knowledge of historiographical debates of Henri Pirenne's time;
- Excellent command of French and English (speaking and writing); fluency in German is an asset;
- Be familiar with text-mining tools;
- Strong interest in Digital Humanities.

Eligibility Criteria for Postdoctoral Fellowships in "International Mobility"

To be selected, the candidate must meet the following eligibility criteria of "international mobility" postdoctoral fellowships, namely:

- Not be bound by any contract of employment with the ULB, paid or unpaid, whatever the timetable, and guarantee this condition throughout the period during which the grant is awarded.
- Have obtained their doctorate within the last 8 years.
- Meet the 'international mobility' conditions, i.e. not have resided or carried out their main activity (employment, studies, etc.) in Belgium for more than 24 months during the last 3 years immediately preceding the first period of postdoctoral study (short-term stays such as holidays, participation in a conference or a short stay to prepare for the postdoctoral position are not taken into account).

Application and Selection Procedure and Deadlines

- Deadline for submission: 30th May 2025
- Remote interview from: 9th June 2025
- Starting date: 1st October 2025

The application dossier must be written in French and include the following documents:

- A curriculum vitae, including a list of publications;
- A cover letter (1 to 2 pages) in which the candidate will show, amongst others, his/her interest in the research field and his/her vision of the project;
- A copy of the PhD diploma;
- A PDF copy of the doctoral thesis, along with any publications that demonstrate the candidate's suitability for the candidate's profile;
- Names and email addresses of 3 referees who may be contacted by the committee responsible for reviewing the applications.

The application file will be sent in electronic format to the project directors, Sébastien de Valeriola (Sebastien.De.Valeriola@ulb.be) and Alexis Wilkin (alexis.wilkin@ulb.be), copying Mélanie de Montpellier (medemont@ulb.be). Additional information can be requested directly from the project directors.

ULB's personnel management policy focuses on diversity and equal opportunities. Further details on gender and diversity policies are available at: <https://www.ulb.be/fr/l-ulb-s-engage/diversites>.