

**CAL Undergraduate Research Scholarships Scheme 2017
Project Proposal Form**

Project Proposer/s:	Karin Barber and Insa Nolte
School/Dept:	SHaC/ Department of African Studies and Anthropology (DASA)
Project Title:	Muslim, Christian and Other Engagements in Religious Pamphlets from Nigeria
Project Summary	
<p>The research project will focus on the interplay between Muslim, Christian, and 'other' ('traditionalist') pamphlets from south-west Nigeria. Most of the pamphlets are in English, and we would not expect the student-scholar to engage with others, but they are part of a multi-lingual as well as a multi-religious corpus: some pamphlets are also in Arabic or Yoruba, and several are bi- or trilingual. The pamphlets were collected in the years 1996-1999 and 2012-16 and comment on different aspects of religious life, including both explicitly religious activities such as prayer and fasting, and more mundane aspects of life such as economic success, marriage, and dealing with threats and detractors. South-west Nigeria is a religiously mixed area, and many pamphlets are written and read by people who are familiar not only with their own religion but also with others.</p> <p>The research will be original. While West African religious ephemera have attracted some attention, this has focused on a direct comparison of Muslim and Christian texts (Karin Barber and Paulo F. De Moraes Farias 2002, 2006) or on one sub-section of the corpus (Stephanie Newell 2005). There has been no consistent exploration of how these pamphlets produce a shared discourse in which many of them engage with religions other than their own. Such engagement, which can be both positive and critical, sometimes takes place directly in the text, but it is also reflected by the fact that many – though not all – pamphlets by authors of Christian, Muslim and other religious backgrounds focus on similar areas of interest (see above).</p>	
What the researcher will do	
<p>The student will read or skim-read about 150 short pamphlets in English on religious themes and produce a database that includes information about the author and a short summary of the contents and argument.</p>	
Skills required by the Scholarship holder	
<p>We are not expecting any undergraduate student to have detailed knowledge of Nigeria, Islam and Christianity, or the study of religious texts or ephemera. We are looking for a student who is pro-active, independent and not afraid to have a go at something new. The student should have a genuine interest in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning more about African history and society, • exploring how Islam, Christianity and traditional practice are mobilised by Nigerian authors, • engaging with popular print materials such as pamphlets, and • developing a range of generic research skills. <p>The student must be able to pay attention to detail, to summarise texts concisely, and to enter written information into an Excel table.</p>	
How will your Project benefit the Scholarship holder?	
<p>The scholarship will help the student to develop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills and experience in searching for and retrieving very specific information (relevant to most UG dissertations, also a transferable skill relevant to a range of jobs). • Experience of working fairly independently and completing challenging tasks within a specified timeframe (also an important transferable skill, useful for a range of jobs). • An understanding of the methodologies, possibilities and limitations of using ephemera (like popular pamphlets) as sources for social and historical research, and the possibilities for combining these in an UG or PG dissertation project. • An exposure to the excitement or 'thrill' of original research. 	
How will the Scholarship benefit your Project?	
<p>The research will complement research by Karin Barber (on Nigerian print and popular cultures) and Insa Nolte (on religious encounter and Muslim-Christian relations in Nigeria). It will also help to lay the groundwork for an exhibition and catalogue of Nigerian pamphlets, newspaper articles, videos, television excerpts and recorded sermons planned to open at the University of Birmingham's Community Festival in 2019. This exhibition is planned as part of an Impact Case Study that builds on the</p>	

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involvement of several members of staff with the British Library's exhibition "West Africa: Cultures of the Word". The student will work closely with Karin Barber and Insa Nolte.