The British Empire Collection of Photographs (INF 10)

About the project

This Central Office of Information collection consists of about 8,000 photographs. The photographs date from the end of World War II to the mid 1960s and illustrate the geography and the way of life in British Colonial and Commonwealth territories. A project to supply an description for each individual photograph has been running for two years and roughly a third of the 394 pieces that make up the series have been catalogued so far.

The collection is arranged by country and then under a generic subject heading such as education, industry, agriculture and food production etc. The photographs usually include a written description and publicity statement on the reverse.

Roles for volunteers

Cataloguing:

Volunteers working in this role work from the original documents adding descriptive elements. The photographs usually include a written description and publicity statement on the reverse which can be quoted or drawn upon to provide the descriptive elements. The descriptions and information included such as departmental references can be typed or handwritten.

Skills required:

Ability to decipher handwriting and extract the key information.
Patience and a methodical approach to recording documents.
Experience of Microsoft Word (additional training is offered by The National Archives if required.)
Some understanding of cataloguing practice and experience of using online catalogues would be helpful.

An introduction to the project - what the records are and why they need to be catalogued will be given along with training using The National Archives PROCAT editorial software. A ½ day document handling course conducted by the Collection Care team will also be given.

The next step is to check the electronic entries for accuracy. This involves re-checking the descriptions against the original document so that we are happy for an entry to go on the online catalogue. This requires patience and a keen eye for detail.

Records specialist: Steven Cable

Location: Task is to be carried out within the Volunteers Room at The National Archives.

Duration of the project: A further two years subject to number of volunteers.