

## Job offer

The KBR and ULB are jointly hiring a postdoctoral researcher specialized in Belgian Comics Studies.

The proposed position is a 100% position structured as follows:

1 FTE : 50% contractual PostDoc (ULB) and 50% contractual SW2 Workleader (KBR).

## Number of position(s)

1 - Reference: Prf-2022-018 - BeComicsLab

## Project

**Be Comics Lab (BCL) – *Comics Legacy: from a new historical object towards contemporary creation***

This project is carried out in the framework of the FED-tWIN Programme of sustainable research cooperation between the Federal Scientific Institutes (FSI) and the Universities.

Although comics are recognised as national heritage, the history of the medium remains largely unknown. Comics suffer from a common misunderstanding that affects popular culture. Their omnipresence in everyday life, their perception as a mass media product let us underestimate the needs of their preservation. If comics represent an important sector of our book industry and a key element of Belgian cultural identity, they still suffer from a lack of legitimacy. So, its corpus is underestimated, mostly invisible in KBR collections, and urgently requires identification, conservation, and accessibility strategies. These are fundamental to their scientific study and promotion to the public. They are also the first step towards the construction of a *heritage of the future* from both contemporary paper and digital works. The study of comics heritage *per se* has now reached a momentum and can *benefit from, be built on*, but above all *enrich* the existing KBR's scientific and digital ecosystem.

The overall goal of BCL therefore is to:

- **develop the identification of a hidden heritage:** The use of recent research tools will expand the comics corpora to a wider range of practices positioned at the margins of (or discarded from) what has been established as a *field*. It will redefine the theoretical contours to study the object in all its diversity from an interdisciplinary perspective. The identification of works will be facilitated by using digital humanities tools. In parallel with the study of mass production, the focus on 'alternative' corpora will spotlight

circulation networks and distribution channels in-/outside the main cultural industries, building a new vision and therefore a new history of the medium ;

- **catalogue and preserve:** BCL will remedy a deficient catalogue concern logging system and develop appropriate tools for digitisation and dissemination of graphic works. Mapping out the collections from the 1840s press to contemporary digital comics, the investigation will break down the silos between collections, ensuring the preservation and availability of the works ;
- **map a national heritage, develop scientific research:** BCL will contribute to the mapping of a heritage scattered throughout Belgium and develop awaited tools to promote a coherent acquisition and conservation policy (databases, online open data dictionary of Belgian creators,...). The mandate holder will set up an ‘innovation hub’ of comics actors, field’s experts and KBR librarians ensuring an expansion of KBR’s collections, avoiding heritage drain, preserving archive materials and stimulating fundraising to develop related research prospects. The aim is to safeguard the diversity of a field of creation of great symbolic and economic value, where the public service mission is being increasingly challenged by private initiatives ;
- **bring heritage to life:** by connecting, through the valorisation of KBR’s collections, the networks of Belgian and international scientific and teaching institutions, BCL will ensure that KBR becomes an effective *knowledge centre* in line with its Action Plan. New synergies will be created (on-/offline curation, exhibitions, popularisation policy) to meet the key role of the library in terms of heritage conservation and scientific dissemination.

## **Mission**

The researcher will be expected to contribute directly to the achievement of the project objectives described above. Within the framework of this FED-tWIN program, he or she will develop and implement new and innovative research projects and ensure a high level of scientific production, which implies in particular:

- the publication of the results of the research carried out through the appropriate channels (dissemination and visibility of research results);
- a strong commitment to scientific communication, both oral and written, for a diverse target audience. Given the social role of KBR, in addition to academic production, popularization publications and the organization of awareness-raising events for the general public are also expected;
- the elaboration of applications for projects promoting the development of a resolutely interdisciplinary scientific research and the valorization, on a national and international level, of the cooperation between ULB and KBR;
- the development and consolidation of the (inter-)national professional and social networks of both organizations in the field of the project;
- pedagogical activities allowing the valorization of the research results in teaching activities at/outside ULB;
- the development of digitization strategies of KBR and other institutions, taking an active approach to develop partnerships with libraries, scientific and heritage institutions related to the field;

- the inclusion of KBR in the national or international dynamics of projects related to the heritage of Belgian comics, in particular, and, more generally, in projects for the preservation of the heritage of comics by also encouraging transnational collaborations and the development of digital humanities;
- the establishment of KBR as the nerve center and thus a central resource for researchers (Belgian and foreign) and the elaboration of new research projects related to the study of comics and intermedia creations, through contemporary and historical studies of international scope.

## Degree

The candidate must hold a PhD. in one or more of the following disciplines: Comics studies, Literary studies, Art history, Cultural or Media studies, Book history and material culture or in another field directly relevant to the project.

The doctoral degree must have been obtained a maximum of 12 years before the deadline for applications. The period is extended by one year for each period of full-time maternity, parental or adoption leave, or for the actual duration of certified periods of long-term illness of the candidate or a family member of the 1<sup>st</sup> degree.

In order for a foreign (non-EU) diploma to be considered, a certificate of equivalence must still be requested from *NARIC*; we advise you – if necessary - to start the recognition procedure at *NARIC* as soon as possible. You must have this recognition at the latest by the date of the appointment. <http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=0&navi=2087>

The researcher will preferably have 3 years of post-doctoral research experience or will have completed at least one post-doctoral term in his/her field.

## Expected skills

The candidate must have a double profile attesting a high level of skills :

- on the one hand, in historical, literary, media, cultural, aesthetic analysis or computational literary analysis and/or digital literature;
- on the other hand, in the field of information and communication techniques and technologies, or library sciences or computational techniques related to metadata management

The candidate must have a doctorate in one of the two fields and a complementary degree or professional experience in the other.

In all cases, the letter of application must include concrete experience in research, teaching and communication.

On a scientific level, the candidate should preferably:

- demonstrate expert knowledge in the main scientific sources on the history and sociology of comics;
- have published widely in the field of comics studies;
- demonstrate knowledge of the Belgian modern and contemporary publishing and press;

- have led or taken part in collective interdisciplinary projects – preferably in line with the nature of KBR collections;
- be open to interdisciplinarity and conceptualisation in the field of analysis of text-image relations, storytelling, intermedia practices, comparative arts;

On the IT side, the candidate must be able to handle projects (database management, program development, use of taxonomies, etc.) and must demonstrate mastery of the digital environment and its techniques, including in-depth knowledge of programming languages used in the humanities and social sciences, web standards and metadata, interoperability and data exchange. If the applicant does not have sufficient of these skills, he/she must demonstrate his/her ability to acquire them and suggest a training plan to be attached to his/her letter of motivation. It will be possible to follow certain courses at ULB to continue training in this field.

The candidate may show experience or knowledge in one or more of the following areas: automatic language processing, machine learning, data science, linked data, taxonomies and ontologies.

### **Additional requirements**

- have knowledge of the Belgian and international comics scene (authorship, readership, publishers, multimedia labs, university research networks, curatorial and educational institutions, festivals, etc.)
- have a professional network in the field of comics;
- have a professional network in the field of digital literature or technologies related to text analysis;
- be familiar with the library sector and the context of KBR's missions;
- have experience in scientific projects developing a diachronic or historical perspective;
- have communicative and editorial skills, in order to reach both the general public and expert audiences (researchers, students, librarians) (e.g. via exhibitions, ...);
- have an interest in digital humanities and the development of their tools and methods (applied to media studies);
- have knowledge of online and offline curation of library holdings for a broad audience;
- experience with interactive web design and crowdsourcing would be an asset;
- be willing to publish in an Open Science environment/for Open Science sources;
- have a good understanding of fundraising mechanisms including for research, (heritage) curation and valorization projects;
- have knowledge of existing legal frameworks for contemporary heritage conservation and valorization;
- pedagogical experience in higher education is an asset.

### **Interpersonal skills**

The candidate must demonstrate an ability to anticipate the future and be comfortable with the idea of managing a long-term, large-scale project.

The candidate will have:

- a goal-oriented approach. He or she will have to demonstrate the will and ambition to generate quality results and assume responsibility for the actions undertaken;
- initiative and autonomy;
- ability to network and work in a collaborative environment with other researchers or with experts from different professional backgrounds (creation of an *innovative hub*).

He or she will have to stay informed about the respective environments of the consortium institutions and maintain the conditions for effective collaboration. This will include maintaining and developing the organizational structure of the project;

- teamwork skills: creating and enhancing team spirit by sharing opinions and ideas and contributing to the resolution of conflicts among colleagues;
- a leadership spirit: he or she will be able to integrate a team, projects or manage projects within KBR and to set up a team, to motivate his or her collaborators, to recognise their qualities, to stimulate them to take initiatives by giving them responsibilities and by adapting himself or herself within the research projects that he or she will initiate in connection with the university, KBR and research funding organisations;
- experience in working in a multilingual environment.

## Linguistic skills

This position is open to candidates who can be assigned to the French language role, in accordance with the rules to that effect determined by the laws on the use of languages in administrative matters. That is to say, to be a graduate of a French-speaking university or to be able to pass a level test proving his/her level of proficiency in French.

If, at the time of recruitment, the candidate does not know French or does not know it well enough, the ULB will offer him or her a training program to acquire the required knowledge. The candidate must also be able to communicate in English (level C1). Given the bilingual environment (FR-NL) in which he or she will find himself or herself following recruitment to KBR and in relation to the treatment of the Dutch-speaking sector of the comic strip included in the project, a knowledge, at least passive, of Dutch is also expected at the time of application with the commitment for the candidate to develop his or her mastery of the language if necessary. The ULB can also provide support for training in these two languages.

Fluency in publishing research in at least two of these three languages will be considered an asset.

## Contractual Information

The position consists of a joint commitment by both partners.

The proposed position is a 100% position structured as follows:

- a 50% open-ended contract at KBR (Boulevard de l'Empereur 4, 1000 Brussels), with the status of project manager (SW2);
- a 50% open-ended "postdoctoral" contract at ULB (Avenue Franklin Roosevelt, 50, 1050 Brussels) as a post-doctoral researcher.

**KBR**, the National Library, located on the Mont des Arts in Brussels, is one of the ten federal scientific institutes. KBR collects all Belgian publications and preserves, manages and studies an extensive cultural and historical heritage. It provides the public with **access to information**, facilitates **research** and offers a broad **cultural experience**. <http://www.kbr.be>

At the **Université libre de Bruxelles**, the researchers of the Department of Languages and Letters work for a large part within PHILIXTE, an interdisciplinary research center that considers the "literary" in its broadest sense. The members of the center study texts from different perspectives:

material, contextual, cultural and intermedia. The research fields and methodological approaches of its members include, in a multilingual context, philology, semiology, literary history and theory, sociology of literature, comparatism (comparative literature and arts), poetics, ecopoetics, ecocriticism, geocriticism, rhetoric, narratology, hermeneutics, and linguistic pragmatics. Favoring inter- and transdisciplinarity, their research also integrates perspectives from feminist, gender, post- or decolonial studies. In connection with the training offered by the Department, PHILIXTE maintains permanent exchanges with cultural institutions – creators and economic, cultural and artistic organizations – but also with conservation institutions (libraries, archives, museums, etc.). Its academic and university mission is linked to the City and the development of axes articulating research and creation. <https://philixte.ulb.ac.be/>

### Working hours

KBR: Monday to Friday, 8.06 am (including 30 minutes mandatory break) to be worked between 7 am and 6 pm. For ULB, the hours will be determined according to the activities.

### Remuneration

KBR: scale SW21 (31.880,00 EUR - 48.350,00 EUR gross non-indexed annual (100% contract). All the services provided in the public services and as a researcher can be valued.

ULB: scale 530 + X years of service. A notice will be sent to the researcher according to the financial deadline of the program.

### Benefits

#### KBR

- reimbursement of home/workplace travel expenses if public transport is used;
- non-statutory pension: constitution of a supplementary pension (second pension pillar)
- easy access via public transport (close to the Brussels-Central station);
- possibility to subscribe to a hospitalization insurance (free for the researcher, at reduced costs for their household members);
- easy access via public transport (close to the Brussels-Central station);
- possibility of obtaining a bilingualism bonus;
- vacation regime: 13 days per calendar year (KBR part-time contract), annual closure between Christmas and New Year;
- free admission to the federal museums.

You can find all the information (advantages...) about working in the federal institutions on the federal employees 'portal.

#### ULB

- contribution to the cost of public transport (minimum distance of 5 km);
- extra-legal pension
- possibility to subscribe to a hospitalization insurance (this will be automatic [free] after 2 years);
- access to the ULB Medical Service which offers general and specialized medical consultations to the entire university community. The fees for consultations and technical procedures performed by the ULB Medical Service doctors are fully covered by the mutual insurance company.

## Applications

Applications should consist of a letter of motivation of max. 2 pages, a detailed *curriculum vitae* with a list of publications, a brief presentation of the 5 most representative publications of the researcher's career, a statement (1 page) of past research and two letters of recommendation. These documents will be accompanied by a research plan emphasizing the development of the candidate's research and that of the team as he/she conceives it in collaboration with research colleagues or the group in which he/she is applying (3 pages), his/her vision of university teaching and its organization (1.5 pages max.), as well as a timetable proposing an organisation of work during the first 3 years (and integrating the personal training plan in computer techniques, if necessary, *see above*), according to the objectives stated above.

All applications should be sent by e-mail before **August 23, 2023** to:

- Sophie VANDEPONTSEELE, Director of Contemporary Collections at the Royal Library of Belgium (KBR) ([sophie.vandepontseele@kbr.be](mailto:sophie.vandepontseele@kbr.be))  
**and**
- Fabrice PREYAT, Professor at ULB and Honorary Research Associate of the FRS-FNRS ([fabrice.preyat@ulb.be](mailto:fabrice.preyat@ulb.be))

The authors of the letters of recommendation will be invited to send their letters directly to Sophie VANDEPONTSEELE **and** Fabrice PREYAT, without going through the candidate.

## Selection procedure

A first selection will be made on the basis of CVs and letters of motivation, by the jury, composed of members of the ULB, KBR and at least one external member. The selected candidates will be invited to an interview which will take place between 13/09/2023 and 25/09/2023. The oral test, lasting 1.5 hours, will aim to assess the motivation and affinity of the candidates with the position as well as their technical and communication skills. He or she will be invited to present, in 45 minutes, a typical lesson related to the Belgian comic strip heritage and one or more of the issues concerned by the present scientific project, to a novice audience. In 15 minutes, the candidate will present his or her background and vision of the project. This presentation will be followed by an interview (debate, exchange of questions) with the jury.

The candidate is expected to take up the position between 1 November and 1 December 2023.

## More information about the selection process?

Fabrice PREYAT (ULB), [fabrice.preyat@ulb.be](mailto:fabrice.preyat@ulb.be) - Vanessa GEMIS, [vanessa.gemis@ulb.be](mailto:vanessa.gemis@ulb.be)  
Sophie VANDEPONTSEELE, [sophie.vandepontseele@kbr.be](mailto:sophie.vandepontseele@kbr.be)

## Report

After receiving your result to a selection test, you can ask for a written report within 3 months.

## Union representation

A union representative may attend any selection organized by KBR. Union representatives are bound by an obligation of discretion with regard to confidential information and documents.

## **Candidates with a disability, disorder or illness**

As a person with a disability, disorder or illness, you may:

- request reasonable accommodations in the selection process;
- request an opinion on the accommodation of your workstation.