Summary of BFI summer work placement

I completed a 28 day work placement in the Special Collections department of the British Film Institute over summer 2015. Special Collections contains scripts, documents and ephemera, stills, posters and designs all related to British film and television. I worked on one of their most recently acquired archives, that of British costume designer Jenny Beavan, who designs predominantly period costume for film and television. Her archive spans her early Merchant & Ivory days costuming for films such as *A Room With A View* (1985)and *Howards End* (1992) through to her most recent works such as *A Kings Speech* (2010)and Guy Ritchie’s *Sherlock Holmes* films (2009, 2011). My placement consisted of rehousing the collection of scripts, mood boards, fabric samples, correspondence, photography and much more, researching into the archive and cataloguing the collection on the BFI database. I also wrote a News and Opinion piece on the archive which was published on the BFI website in conjunction with the press release. I received training on the structure of the archive and the BFI’s cataloguing system and enjoyed attending project related events.

It was very useful to gain a deeper understanding of the structure and workings of a major archive, in terms of becoming archive literate for my own personal use of such institutions and also as work experience for later in my career. The costume design element also fed into my current project and I received useful suggestions, films and reading from my colleagues, many of whom had transitioned from academia to archives. It was great to have first hand experience of work which combined both academic research and more practical elements. Whilst the archive is a great scholarly resource, I enjoyed working in a setting which attributes equal importance to transmitting academic research to the wider public through archival resources, exhibitions, press, publications and educational projects. Whilst it was challenging to keep up both the work placement and my PhD, having a different area of work to apply myself to did make the time spent on my thesis more productive. I found the placement both intellectually stimulating and valuable in terms of exploring other avenues for a research active career.

<http://www.bfi.org.uk/people/hope-margetts>