

## Call for Applications for a Postdoctoral Fellowship in Digital Humanities

### Université libre de Bruxelles

#### Working Conditions

- Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB)
- Fields: Digital Humanities
- Duration: 9 months – January 2025 to September 2025
- Full-time position, in person
- Work environment: ReSic (Centre de recherche en Information et Communication); sociAMM (Histoire, Arts, Cultures des Sociétés Anciennes, Médiévales et Modernes); Ratio DH, research center specialised in Digital Humanities of the Maison des Sciences Humaines
- Amount of the fellowship: 3,055.36 € net minimum /month

#### Description of the Project

The selected candidate will carry on postdoctoral research as a 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 (ReSic, Faculté de Lettres, Traduction et Communication, ULB) and Alexis Wilkin (sociAMM, Faculté de Philosophie et Sciences sociales, ULB). This postdoctoral research will be carried on in close collaboration with the Libraries and Scientific Information Department of the ULB.

This project has 3 objectives:

- To develop and implement a complete Handwritten Text Recognition (HTR) workflow;
- To apply this workflow to a corpus composed of archives documents written by the Belgian historian Henri Pirenne (1862-1935), from the Henri Pirenne Archives Collection held at the ULB.
- By applying text mining tools to the obtained transcriptions, to conduct an “intellectual genetic” analysis of one of the major works of Henri Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne*.

#### Job and Role Description

This postdoctoral position, as a 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 (ReSic, LTC Faculty) and Alexis Wilkin (sociAMM, PhiSoc Faculty). For a start, it will focus on the two first objectives of the project, meaning the development and the implementation of the HTR workflow and the training of models on Pirenne’s manuscripts; then, on the genetic analysis made possible thanks to the transcriptions of the *Mahomet et Charlemagne* versions available in the Pirenne Archives Collection held at the ULB. It will not be possible to work remotely (a workstation will be provided).

In particular, the selected candidate will be responsible for:

- The development and the implementation of the HTR workflow, including:
  - the production of training data sets with the help of teams of student annotators, who will need to be trained and supervised (using the e-Scriptorium software);
  - the training of automatic transcription models (using the Kraken system);
  - the quality assessment of these models;
  - the processing of outputs generated by these models so that they can be used in text mining projects.

- The application of the HTR models and the application of the processing steps;
- The application of text-mining tools to align successive versions of *Mahomet et Charlemagne*, in order to prepare the material required for genetic analysis;
- The publication of results (models and research outcomes).

The selected candidate will participate in the activities of [ReSic](#), [sociAMM](#), and Ratio DH<sup>1</sup>. These combined work environments will assure to the researcher access to diverse areas of expertise relevant to the completion of the project for which he/she will be responsible.

## Required Profile

### *Degree Required*

- PhD degree in Digital Humanities, Information Sciences, Computational Linguistics, Statistics/Mathematics or Engineering Sciences. Any other assimilated or similar disciplinary field will be evaluated by the selection committee.

### *Main Skills Required*

- Excellent command of French and English (speaking and writing);
- Skills in project and team management;
- Good knowledge of a programming language, preferably Python;
- Good knowledge of HTR tools, in particular Kraken;
- Good knowledge of tools/libraries of text mining;
- Strong interest in History.

### *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: Monday, 7th October 2024
- Remote interview from Monday, 14th October 2024
- Starting date: Monday, 6th January 2025

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<sup>1</sup> Ratio DH is a research centre specialised in Digital Humanities, which was recently founded and integrated in the ULB’s [Maison des Sciences Humaines](#) (Humanities Institute). Its objectives are twofold: on the one hand, to host collaborative and interdisciplinary research projects in which quantitative and numerical methods are applied to issues and data related to Humanities; on the other hand, to bring together experts of different periods and disciplinary fields, in order to initiate methodological and epistemological discussions and reflections on the process of applying these techniques, which is not self-explanatory. In this respect, Ratio DH follows on from the laboratory [QuaDiHum](#).

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

- A curriculum vitae, including a publications list;
- A cover letter (1 to 2 pages) in which the candidate will show, amongst other, 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 and any publications that may attest to the candidate's suitability for the profile sought for the project;
- Names and email addresses of 3 referees who may be contacted by the committee in charge of reviewing the applications.

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