

Small Forms – Between Materiality, Mediality and Genre

2026 Annual Theme of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Scholarship Program



The Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin invites applications for research projects in the 2026 scholarship program on the theme of “Small Forms – Between Materiality, Mediality and Genre.” The size and scope of inscribed artifacts as factors constituting meaning and structuring reception have been attracting considerable attention for some time within the paradigm of textual materiality research - particularly with regard to the aesthetics of scaling effects. At the same time, more recent studies, such as those produced not least in the context of the Graduiertenkolleg Literatur- und Wissensgeschichte kleiner Formen, have made it clear that the equation small form = simple form (André Jolles) is at least doubtful and that a magnum opus is also possible in a small format. The potential of written small forms to reduce complexity and to overcome both the limitations of media in the pre-modern era and their dissolution of boundaries in the digital age is indeed impressive.

The identification of small forms in their sheer diversity can only occur relationally. For that reason, the comprehensive typographic and non-typographic collections of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin from numerous writing cultures in Europe, Africa and Asia present a premier source repository and resonance space for studies on small forms from material, media or genre-specific perspectives.

Possible topics for research proposals include but are not limited to thumb bibles, miniature Korans, fragments, broadsides, carte-de-visite photographs, billets and micrographs, haikus, fairy tales, recipes, moments musicaux, registers, glosses, catalog cards or lists. The Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin expressly welcomes applications in the fields of digital humanities and computer vision in view of its research focus on machine segmentation and automatic recognition of small-format composite image documents such as watermarks, binding stamps, bookplates, printer's marks and fleuronné.

Further information:

<https://staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/en/extras/spezielle-interessen/scholarship-program>
