

M4C Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA)

PROJECT TITLE				
Bertie on Screen: An inquiry into the Bertrand Russell Archives and their screen adaptation potential for the East Asian market.				
LEAD INSTITUTION				
Name of HEI institution	De Montfort University			
Lead regional city	Birmingham <input type="checkbox"/>	Coventry <input type="checkbox"/>	Leicester <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nottingham <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
PARTNER ORGANISATION				
Name of organisation	Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation			
Website	https://www.russfound.org/			
<p>THE PROJECT</p> <p>There is a rising market for British led-research informed biopic feature films, this collaborative project aims to respond to this opportunity. This is a practice-led collaborative PhD project designed to develop unexplored archival materials into a ready-to-shoot feature biopic screenplay, about the Nobel Prize winning British philosopher, Bertrand Russell. With a specific focus, the screenplay will be developed particularly aiming at the Asian market. In line with the AHRC's latest funding strategies, this project will not only generate original research outputs, but also societal and economic impact.</p> <p>This is an original and unique research project that is not only regional, but also international. This is the first of its kind to be conducted around Russell's life—a pioneering endeavour.</p> <p>THE PROCESS</p> <p>Adopting an innovative, decolonial and transnational approach to its research design, the proposed project critically examine and evaluate the existing archives documenting Russell's life and work held at the BRPF. It will investigate the potential for screen adaptations and new intellectual property developments. It will particularly focus on screen adaptations for the Asian market, where Russell has a substantial reputation.</p> <p>The following questions will be addressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the stories found within the archive with potential to be developed into a feature film? - Which are the most appealing stories to an international market, particularly the Asian market? - How can Russell's character be developed for screen adaptations that is truthful to his original but also inspiring for the next generations? - What are the latest trends in the Asian market for biopic themed feature films, what is the market feasibility? - What has been the reception for UK/US co-produced biopic feature films in the past 10 years, what worked well for the stories for their success in terms of character design and storytelling on a particular event? <p>This project echoes the British Film Institute's recently announced global strategy (Global Screen Fund, 2024), to support British films and co-productions to better engage with international markets beyond Europe and North America.</p>				

The project emerges from and cements the BRPF and DMU's shared mission on peacebuilding. DMU is the only university in the UK that is recognised as a global impact hub for the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is particularly committed to promoting SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions.

The expected outputs will include a contextual and critical thesis, a screenplay, a treatment and a pitch deck.

THE PLACE

The Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation (BRPF hereafter), based in Nottingham, carries forward Russell's work for peace, human rights and social justice. Bertrand Russell was a mathematician, philosopher and social activist who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950. He established the BRPF in 1963 – as a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee – towards the end of his long life.

The BRPF holds extensive primary archival materials about Russell such as correspondence on human rights cases around the world, documentation for the International War Crimes Tribunal on Vietnam which Russell convened in 1966, as well as personal possessions such as clothing and family portraits of the historic Russell family. BRPF has access to extensive holdings at the Bertrand Russell Archives at McMaster University, Canada, which include world-leading audio-visual resources.

The candidate will be joining the vibrant research community at DMU, co-supervised by Dr. Hiu Man Chan and Prof. Kenneth Morrison. Dr. Chan has wide experience as an entrepreneur and consultant specialising in international collaboration in the creative and cultural industries, especially the film sector, with particular expertise in the internationalisation of UK IPs in the Asian market. Prof. Morrison brings expertise in historical and archival research, as well as their related commercialisation prospects.

THE PERSON

The ideal candidate will be someone who already has some experience working in the film industry as a screenplay development researcher or assistant on biopic projects after their postgraduate degree.

The candidate will be one who is confident in carrying on independent research and looking for an opportunity to launch their career to another level as an established screen writer, specialising in biopics or films based on true events.

This PhD project will provide an opportunity for the candidate to develop creative practice at doctoral level through a credited screenplay based on Nobel Prize winning philosopher Bertrand Russell, embodying research that will bring new critical and historical insight to the subject. In addition, the expertise among the supervision team will nurture the candidate's entrepreneurial mindset, opening insights into the industry from a global perspective.

HOW TO FIND OUT MORE. Please email the lead university supervisor if you want to find out more about this CDA project.

Lead HEI Supervisor:	Dr Hiu Man Chan
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