



PROJECT TITLE

A critical history of British dance teaching: Creating and reactivating the archive of the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing (ISTD).

LEAD INSTITUTION

Name of HEI institution	Coventry University			
Lead regional city	Birmingham <input type="checkbox"/>	Coventry <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Leicester <input type="checkbox"/>	Nottingham <input type="checkbox"/>

PARTNER ORGANISATION

Name of organisation	Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing (ISTD)
URL for organisation website	Homepage - Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing (istd.org)

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

To enable M4C to promote the CDA project effectively on the DTP website please can you present the information for applicants about the CDA project under the following headings:

Project: Please ensure that the project title and project description will make sense to all readers, keep the title and description as clear and straightforward as possible.

Process: Clearly articulate the expectations of the methods of research required to develop the project.

Place: Focus the marketing text on telling potential applicants what will be expected of them, who they will be working with and how they will be supported.

Person: Broadly identify the desirable knowledge, skills and experience applicants should have without using language which will discourage qualified and talented applicants.

Project: Imperial Society of the Teachers for Dancing (ISTD) is renowned for the teaching of a wide variety of genres and styles including Ballet, Bharatanatyam, Tap Dancing, Ballroom, Street Dance and Salsa. Along with its impact on dance teaching internationally, it has also made a significant contribution to the development of the history of British dance from the early 20th century.

The ISTD is keen to reactivate this history in relation to recent equality, diversity and equity challenges while also securing the relevance and importance of the Society as a corner stone in British dance culture and history—to learn from its past and in doing so develop future syllabi in a way that fosters both longevity and equity.

The ISTD collection, housed in a small library at its offices, includes: administrative records; copies of the Society’s Dance magazine; major industry journals and musical scores; printed materials; signed photographs and diverse memorabilia; Faculty Committee records; and records of the Society’s teacher training institute.

One or all these objectives should be highlighted:

- Develop an archival system that will enable the ISTD to provide public access to the content which is now partly on display, otherwise in boxes.
- Collect primary material in the form of oral histories from significant pedagogues and dance leaders who have been important to the ISTD. Collecting these materials is timely as some individuals are now of advanced age and this knowledge is at risk of being lost.
- Accumulate important ISTD ephemera held by individuals and in private collections involving investigation into locating this content and agreeing terms for their inclusion in the archive.

The ISTD will reach its 125th birthday in 2029; the project will thus lead up to the celebrations, taking advantage of the anniversary to reach contributors and to publicise the creation of the archive through an exhibition of selected content in two cities – London and Coventry.

Key research question may be:

1. What archival structure and metadata schema is the most appropriate to catalogue and organise the ISTD archive, and which takes account of unique and vulnerable content?

2. What new insights does the archive reveal about the history of British dance teaching?
3. What role can oral histories play in developing a critical engagement with archival content?
4. What new research can emerge from the creation of the archive?
5. How does an exhibition, as method of public engagement, increase access to and understanding of archival content and the organisation that the archive represents?
- 6.

Process: The project will involve a range of methods rooted in archival research and creation, including research visits to explore other archive collections (e.g. V&A, NRCD, RAD, Uni of Bristol Theatre Archives), archival methods, curatorial practice, oral histories, exhibition creation and other methods to ‘animate’ the collection. The collaborative context will enable the candidate to have direct access to primary dance content that is not publicly accessible, access to the custodians of the content to gain knowledge about the content, and to researchers who have experience of creating archives of dance content as well as in-depth expertise of British dance history.

Place: The [Centre for Dance Research | Coventry University](https://www.chisenhaledancespace.co.uk) is a team of international researchers and postgraduates. C-DaRE has pioneered research on the collecting and preservation of intangible heritage in numerous projects and is presently hosting an M4C Collaborative Doctoral Award with the Chisenhale Dance Space <https://www.chisenhaledancespace.co.uk>.

The project will be led by British cultural and theatre dance historian Dr Victoria Thoms. Professor and Centre Director Sarah Whatley will support the project with her extensive experience in archiving dance. Gemma Matthews, Director of Membership and Communications will be the collaborating supervisor at the ISTD, supported also by the ISTD CEO Ginny Brown. The ISTD archive will be accessed in London: supervisions can take place in Coventry or London. International students are welcome but must live in the UK for the duration of the award. It is assumed that student would be based in the Midlands and commit to in-person participation in both C-DaRE and M4C events and initiatives.

Person: We are looking for applicants with a strong record of prior academic achievement and/or substantial and recognised professional achievement. While experience with dance in the UK would be beneficial, we welcome applicants with a background in museum and archive curation/studies, and British cultural history. Applications from dance professionals (with first HE degree) with expertise and contextual knowledge of ISTD recognised genres such as South Asian Dance, Ballet, Social Dance and Natural/Contemporary Dance are also welcomed.

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

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