

M4C Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA)

Project Title				
Reflecting Organisational Transformation through New Curatorial Practice				
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 type="checkbox"/>
PARTNER ORGANISATION				
Name of organisation	FABRIC			
URL for organisation website	https://fabric.dance/ https://danceexchange.org.uk/ https://www.dance4.co.uk/			
THE RESEARCH PROJECT				
<p>FABRIC has been formed from the recent merger of Dance4 and DanceXchange. This project provides a unique opportunity to interrogate FABRIC's archives which contain historically significant performance and practice-related materials. The candidate will use archival and curatorial research practices to explore strategies for driving transformation in dance regionally and nationally.</p> <p>Drawing on extant research into archival and curatorial practice in performance arts, the candidate will explore cultural and artistic stories that emerge from FABRIC's past curations. Research may identify key challenges currently faced by the UK dance sector, such as decolonisation of Euro-centric artistic practices and agendas; evidencing how aesthetic decisions inform funding patterns, and examining ongoing challenges around accessibility and engagement for audiences and communities. The project will inform new narratives and priorities through which FABRIC may develop its strategic positioning. The aim is to evaluate how curatorial practices can impact dance sectors and create new insight into future work and its presentation to new audiences.</p> <p>Practices in the dance and performance arts sectors are rapidly evolving in part due to the nature of emerging technologies that help to democratise public access and engagement with material in new formats. Recent projects include PRONI's Making the Future (2021) and CollabArchive (2022) that put the needs of audiences at the heart of digital inclusion agendas to consider how materials can shape audience experiences, build communities and grow engagement with archives by enabling the discovery of hidden stories. This research therefore presents a timely opportunity for FABRIC's curatorial vision to emerge alongside contemporary digital cultural practices that engage new audiences by extending current thinking into eg., storytelling, community outreach activities.</p> <p>The project will augment archival analysis with interviews of previous curators of festivals programmed by FABRIC to assess curatorial decisions made, roles of stakeholders, dance artists and communities with whom FABRIC have engaged and with whom they are developing new work. Through explorative processes, the transformation and growth of FABRIC will be evaluated as a model for change in the dance sector. The project sits within AHRC's 'Care for the Future: Thinking Forward through the Past' (2018) theme which explores relationships between past, present and future and investigates the significance of continuity and change.</p>				

Research questions to be explored are: What can analysis of FABRIC'S archive and organisational transformation reveal about trends in curation, accessibility and engagement? How might archives support co-creativity between artists, communities and FABRIC? What new curatorial practices can be generated to increase accessibility and engagement? What impact can a new framework for curatorial practice that integrates digital culture have on dance and the wider performing arts sector? The candidate will likely use a mixed methods research design, employing qualitative research and practice-based methods which may include archival analysis, using digital technologies to explore rich media content; interviews with key stakeholders and practice-based curation to test research frameworks.

Supervisory Team comprises Sally Doughty (Associate Professor/Reader, Dance) and Professor Tracy Harwood (De Montfort University, Digital Culture), and Hannah Sharpe (Programme Director, FABRIC). The candidate will be based primarily with the first supervisor and have regular access to research labs, and is expected to participate in workshops and seminars. FABRIC will regularly host the candidate eg., one week per month, to support access to archival materials, be available for discussions and share curatorial practices. As the project develops, it is anticipated the candidate will be spend between 3-6 months on a specific brief focusing on curation, programming and producing within FABRIC. The candidate will also have opportunities to engage with public facing events, such as shadowing festival/event curators/programmers events and being part of the team. There are opportunities to accompany FABRIC to international events, such as Tanzmesse in Dusseldorf; CINAR festival in Montréal, Tokyo Performing Arts Market, to engage with the artform and network. Such activities will be useful to generating deeper insight into how emerging curatorial practices can develop new audiences, thereby enhancing future employability skills in, for example, curating, audience engagement and evaluation of activities.

The research will draw on the academic supervisors' expertise in practice-based research and emergent digital cultural practices through which audience engagement is being developed. Expected outcomes will inform future opportunities as the partnership grows, for example, new commissions, new ways to integrate emerging technologies into the organization's operations, new ways of teaching curatorial practices, etc.

The successful candidate will demonstrate skills and expertise in a performing arts discipline or be empathetic to the performing arts. Some knowledge of programme and/or curating in the arts will be an advantage, and digital skills will be beneficial.

HOW TO FIND OUT MORE

Lead HEI Supervisor:	Sally Doughty
Lead HEI Supervisor Email:	sdoughty@dmu.ac.uk