



Unlocking New Knowledge Through Collaboration: Celebrating 20 Years of the Collaborative Doctoral Partnership Scheme

5th & 6th November 2026 - V&A South Kensington and Hybrid (Microsoft Teams)

For twenty years, the Collaborative Doctoral Partnership (CDP) scheme has enabled innovative research across museums, archives, libraries, galleries, and heritage organisations. Through collaboration between universities and cultural institutions, CDP researchers have uncovered new narratives, explored collections in new ways, developed innovative methodologies, and created meaningful connections between research and the wider public.

This anniversary conference celebrates the transformative impact of the CDP scheme. We invite current students, alumni, supervisors, and partner institutions to reflect on how collaborative research has unlocked new knowledge, new relationships, and new possibilities across the cultural heritage sector.

We welcome proposals that explore how the CDP model has enabled research discoveries, institutional change, public engagement, methodological innovation, and new understandings of collections, histories, and communities.

Submissions may take the form of papers, panels, digital projects, podcasts, films, performances, workshops or other creative and practice based outputs. We welcome contributions from CDP researchers at all stages of their PhD, CDP alumni, and those contributing in other ways to the scheme (such as CDP supervisors) . Works-in-progress are also welcome.

The CDP Coordination Group is able to cover travel and accommodation costs for all speakers selected to participate in the conference and all current CDP researchers who wish to attend.

Thematic Groups for Call for Contributions

1. Engagement and Narratives

How has collaborative research helped uncover new stories, voices, and perspectives?

This strand explores the ways CDP research has illuminated overlooked social histories, challenged dominant cultural narratives, and created new opportunities for engagement with diverse audiences.

Possible topics include:

- Recovering underrepresented or marginalised histories
- Inclusive interpretation and representation
- Outreach and public engagement
- Visitor participation and audience research
- Reconnecting the public with collections and heritage

2. Materials and Collections for Interdisciplinary Research

How has collaboration unlocked new ways of understanding collections and material culture for various fields?

This strand focuses on the access that the CDP provides in exploring the role of objects, archives, collections, and material evidence in generating new research insights and interpretations for various disciplines.

Possible topics include:

- Reimagining relationships between collections and various fields outside of historical studies
- New approaches to collection interpretation
- Innovations in the material sciences
- Digital collections and accessibility

3. Methodologies and Practices

How has the CDP model enabled new research methods and ways of working?

This strand examines the methodological innovations that emerge through collaboration between academic and cultural heritage partners.

Possible topics include:

- Collaborative research practices
- Interdisciplinary methodologies
- Practice based and creative research
- Digital humanities and emerging technologies
- Visitor research and participatory methods

- Lessons learned from partnership working

4. Impact, Change, and Lessons Learnt

How has CDP research created change within institutions, communities, academic fields, and individual careers?

This strand invites reflection on the broader impact of collaborative doctoral research and its contribution to the future of the cultural heritage sector. We encourage submissions of collaborative papers between CDP students and their partner institutions.

Possible topics include:

- Institutional transformation and organisational learning
- Research impact beyond academia
- Policy, practice, and sector development
- Career journeys and professional development
- Personal reflections on the CDP Model
- Shaping future approaches to collaboration

Formats

We welcome a variety of contribution formats, including:

- Lightning talk (3-5 minutes)
- Longer talk (10-15 minutes)
- Panel discussion (30 minutes)
- Workshops, Performances and Creative Practice (20-60 minutes, max 45 participants)
- Digital format (posters, podcasts, films, graphics, etc. - no time limit)

Through these contributions, the conference aims to celebrate twenty years of collaborative doctoral research and explore how partnership working continues to unlock new knowledge, new audiences, and new futures for the cultural heritage sector.

Call for Contributions

Proposals for contributions can be submitted through this sign up form:

- [CDP at 20 Call for Contributions – Fill in form](#)

The deadline for submission is **Sunday 23rd August 2026** at 23:59.

Any queries can be directed to the CDP Researcher Organising Committee at cdp20conference@gmail.com

CDP Researcher Organising Committee

- Sofia Cotrona (Imperial War Museums & University for the Creative Arts)
- Emma King (The National Archives & King's College London)
- Oak Lawrenson (National Museums Northern Ireland & Ulster University)
- Kahyun Lee (Tate & Royal College of Arts)
- Georgia Millsom (Tate & Imperial)
- Sophie Nardi-Bart (Portsmouth City Council & University of Portsmouth)
- Andy Teye (The National Archives & Roehampton University)