Northern Bridge Consortium
Collaborative Doctoral Awards
Competition (Staff-led)

NORTHERN BR—DGE CONSORTIUM DOCTORAL TRAINING PARTNERSHIP

Project Proposal Application
To be completed by the lead proposed supervisor,
with input from the non-HE Partner Organisation(s).

UKRI **Arts and Humanities Research Council**

SECTION 1: PROJECT SUMMARY AND APPLICANT DETAILS	
Proposed Project Title:	Women donors and the making of the World Cultures collection in the care of Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums
Project Summary: *(Maximum 100 words)*	This project addresses the significant limitations in our knowledge about the role and agency of women collectors/donors in the formation of World Cultures collections in UK regional museums, by focusing on the extensive collection in the care of Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums/Great North Museum: Hancock. Using digital humanities, archival, cultural studies and digital storytelling methods, it will produce academic, museum and public facing outputs, which will generate new knowledge about women collectors/donors and their trans/national networks, and will advance the partner's strategic goal to diversify and decolonise established museum narratives through collections research, audience engagement and community relationship-building.
Host University:	Newcastle University

Name of Non-HE Partner Organisation(s):
(Add more lines if needed)
1. Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums (TWAM), Great North Museum: Hancock (GNM:H)
2.

Contact(s) at Non-HE Partner Organisation(s):
(Add more lines if needed)

Name:	Joanne Anderson	Email:	
Name:	Andrew Parkin	Email:	

Primary AHRC Subject Area: *Select one subject area from the list here. Please do not add or amend subjects, as there will not be a corresponding Subject Area Review Panel to assess your nomination.*	Cultural and Museum Studies
Does the project include a Creative Practice component?	YES ☐ NO ☒
Do you consider the project to be interdisciplinary?	YES ☒ NO ☐

If you consider the project to be interdisciplinary, please state why:
*(Maximum 100 words. Please note that your application will be assessed by the relevant **primary AHRC subject area review panel**. However, in this space you should indicate which other subject areas your proposal covers and how your methodology is genuinely interdisciplinary.)*

This project bridges two AHRC research areas, Cultural and Museum Studies and Library and Information Studies. The doctoral research project aims to address a central concern in Cultural and Museum Studies, related to the decolonisation of UK cultural institutions, drawing on theories,

practices and research methods from across the two research areas, such as digital humanities methods to analyse museum catalogue data and archival research to assemble people and object biographies/networks.

SECTION 2: PROJECT PROPOSAL AND CASE FOR SUPPORT

Please provide full details of the proposal and make your case for support below:
(Maximum 750 words)

This collaborative doctoral project aims to discover hidden information and develop new knowledge about the role of women collectors and donors of World Cultures (formerly referred to as ethnographic) artefacts and specimens during the 19th and 20th centuries, currently under the care of Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums (TWAM) / Great North Museum: Hancock (GNM:H). Although the topic of women collectors during the Victorian period has attracted some attention (Leis 2023, Stammers 2021) and there is a developing body of research on the role of women botanists and horticulturists in the creation of scientific museum collections (Ridley 2023), the role of women donors of world cultures collections has only recently been highlighted by scholars (Deuben and Mbewe 2022). The emerging literature has focused primarily on stories of specific women collectors in the archives of large institutions such as the British Museum and the V&A (e.g. Acharya 2024). To date, no substantial study on the role of women donors of world cultures collections has been carried out in UK regional museums.

However, TWAM's object catalogue indicates that c. 1/4 (c. 1300 artefacts) of the world cultures collection is associated with women donors; 15 women donors were recorded in the GNM:H's Pacific collections alone, between 1855 and 1988 (Jessop and Starkey 1998). This is replicated in other regional museums, e.g. Bristol Museum (Curtis 2022). As no previous research has been carried out on women donors and their donations in GNM:H's world cultures collection, this aspect of the history of the institution alongside the national/transnational networks of NE women collectors and donors continue to remain hidden from view and critical engagement. This research, therefore, is an essential step for TWAM/GNM:H towards developing much-necessary knowledge and expertise related to the world cultures collections, understanding the circumstances under which these women donated these artefacts/specimens, and materialising the museum's commitment to diversity of voices and decolonisation. By paying attention to the motivations, (hi)stories and collecting/donating practices of women in world culture museum collections this project aims to address misconceptions and silences about the role of women in UK cultural institutions, the cultural life or the region, and their agency in colonial societies.

The project will mobilise archival and collections research, digital humanities research methods and digital storytelling approaches, alongside critical heritage and memory studies to address the following research questions:
- To what extent were there women collectors and/or donors in the world culture collections in TWAM's care?
- What are their national/transnational family, social and learning networks and how have they shaped their collecting and donating practices, and, in turn, the collections themselves?
- How can data-driven, place-based digital storytelling support decolonising approaches to narrating the (hi)stories of these women and enabling alternative forms of audience engagement?

The research design is interdisciplinary and iterative: The student will be supported to use **digital humanities methods** to map out the presence of women donors of world culture collections across the life and collections of the institution. These will include the use of open-source tools (such as OpenRefine) to analyse extensive digital resources, including the structured data in the museum's collections management system and the digitised Transactions of the Natural History Society of Northumbria (NHSN). Through **archival and object-based research** the project will establish the social, family, and learning networks of up to three selected women donors and provide necessary new knowledge on the conditions that enabled these women to travel and/or collect and build relationships with the museum. These (hi)stories will be further developed and communicated through **digital storytelling** (e.g. through StoryMaps) to support audience and community engagement (including in the making of the stories) with the emerging (hi)stories of people and the world cultures collections in the NE of England and globally.

The project is timely and ambitious as it aims to establish both an ethical and scalable research framework and methodology to explore the institution-wide perspective, encompassing all world culture collections in TWAM's care and, for the first time, to narrate the (hi)stories of specific individuals in complex colonial and personal networks. Therefore, it will directly inform the partners' museological practice, through incorporating richer gender-based narratives in TWAM's object documentation and museum interpretation, and unlock opportunities for further research, community engagement and relationship-building with source communities.

A CDA is essential for the implementation of the project: its outputs include a thesis, a report on the collection mapping methodology to support the work of GNM:H's/TWAM's curatorial and learning teams, digital visualisations and stories that will be disseminated in the gallery and online, and research materials for shaping the redevelopment of the World Cultures Gallery long-term. The project will challenge and prepare the student with a diverse skillset and experiences transferable across diverse cultural sectors.

Provide details of any resources and facilities, including equipment, fieldwork, training, etc., that will be required to complete the project successfully. <u>NBC has limited Research Training Support Grant funding, which may affect the feasibility of high-cost projects</u>. Please note where you might also secure additional funding, (e.g. partner organisations; department or school). Include estimated costs:
(Maximum 200 words)

Key physical facilities for this research include the library and archive of the Natural History Society of Northumbria, TWAM's collection management system, and the world cultures collections stores (Discovery Museum). Additional resources are available in membership-free

archives in Newcastle City Library, The British Newspaper Archive online, Tyne and Wear Archives, County Archives, and the Robinson Library. One month's access to Ancestry.co.uk will be required beyond the free trial period, at the cost of £19.99.

For the digital humanities methods, open-source tools will be prioritised for purposes of sustainability and interoperability. The student will use the open access OpenRefine and/or R software platforms and the free membership of the data visualisation tool Flourish. Platforms such as StoryMaps will be explored for digital storytelling - NU holds an institutional licence. No special facilities are needed to use these tools.

The student will access TWAM's in-house collections management/documentation training; NU's Researcher Education and Development (RED) programme and Northern Bridge (NB) provide training in archival research and in R. Comprehensive online free tutorials for digital tools are widely available, including through ProgrammingHistorian.org.

Local travel will be required as well as some moderate national/international travel, which will be well within the NB available support. The student will take advantage of any additional training funding opportunities within SACS and the Centre for Heritage.

Outline the arrangements for communication between the non-HE partner organisation and the academic host institution in regard to project management and monitoring academic progress:
(Maximum 200 words)

Deadlines for the student's progress, research and training will be agreed at the project's outset and monitored through frequent full-team meetings at the GNM:H or NU (at least every two months). We anticipate that these will be more frequent in the early stages of the project, when the focus and design of the research will be decided. The academic supervisory team will be responsible for monitoring the academic integrity of the study and ensuring it meets standard PhD milestones and ethics as per NU policies, whilst the GNM:H advisors will ensure the student's access to the museum materials, collection management system, in-house training and expertise required for the project and the student's professional development. The student will also have informal access to mentoring by their external advisors by virtue of having access to desk space in the museum. The student will meet their lead academic supervisor monthly at NU, and maintain regular email exchanges as required.

The student will undertake an induction at GNM:H/TWAM, in addition to standard induction activities at NB, NU and the School of Arts and Cultures.

Building on positive experiences in collaboration between the partners, the student will use Teams for easy and secure sharing of files and informal communication across the team.

What benefits will there be for the candidate and the non-HE partner organisation as a result of your collaboration?
(Maximum 200 words)

The student will benefit from the opportunity to work with unique cultural artefacts, natural and geological specimens and to contact interdisciplinary research within the environment of a big regional museum service with a significant, extensive and diverse world cultures collection (c. 5000 artefacts). The project will enable the student to experiment and master both digital methodologies and communication skills alongside archival research skills and critical heritage concepts, which are transferable across different disciplines. Through the creation of digital stories, the student will have the opportunity to disseminate their work to a broader and diverse audience beyond academia.

The collaboration provides GNM:H/TWAM with the opportunity to carry out innovative and timely research that directly contributes to one of its four strategic thematic priorities for the next 5 years 'Routes and Roots', which interrogates the origins of the collections. The mapping of women collectors and/or donors will advance GNM:H's/TWAM's capacity to bring to the fore marginalised perspectives, present hidden histories and reach out to new audiences. On an organisational level, this partnership provides an opportunity for the lead advisor at GNM:H to develop PhD supervision skills. The research is expected to support GNM:H/TWAM to explore new positive relationships with source communities and develop new relationships with peers in the international museum sector extending the work that has started with Te Papa Museum, NZ.

State what financial (if any) or in-kind contribution the non-HE partner organisation will be making over the duration of the award:
*(Maximum 200 words. A financial contribution is **not** a requirement. However, the AHRC expect that **non-HE partners based overseas** will make a financial contribution to the costs of the student's return travel and accommodation when visiting.)*

The partner organisation will provide in-kind contributions throughout the duration of the award. These will include staff time: two days a month for the primary advisor, Joanne Anderson, and one day a month for the second advisor, Andrew Parkin, who will provide mentorship to the student and the primary supervisor (= £738 per month for the duration of the award). The student will access TWAM-wide opportunities for training and development, especially within the Documentation, Conservation, Communications and Exhibitions teams. This will include training on and use of the museum database Ke:Emu to access object records and use of TWAM's online archival subscriptions. The partner advisors will facilitate access to TWAM's connections with other World Cultures museums in the UK and relevant curatorial groups. GNM:H will also provide areas to work, including desk space in GNM:H, and at the Resource Centre at Discovery that houses the bulk of the world cultures collections. Access to space in the galleries, display hardware and/or on TWAMS's website for the dissemination of the digital stories will also be facilitated

with relevant teams across the organisation. GNM:H/TWAM will make available £500 for expenses associated with public engagement/display activities related to the project.

Describe the nature of the collaborative arrangement and the activities the candidate will be undertaking with the non-HE partner organisation:
(*Maximum 200 words*)

Over the course of this project, the student will contribute to relevant working groups, meetings and activities in the wider GNM:H/TWAM teams. On site, the student will have access to a guest staff card/login and a hot-desk in a shared office with the partner advisors. The student will also benefit from meetings (as required) with Malavika Anderson, the museum's Manager, who leads the museum's efforts to develop decolonial practices; Dr Kate Holden, the museum's Learning Officer; and Suzie Batey, TWAM's Digital Producer. The student will receive training on Ke:Emu Collections Management System, have supervised access to the world culture collection stores (in Discovery Museum), contribute to relevant documentation tasks, and use the Natural History Society of Northumbria (NHSN)/Society of Antiquaries (SANT) Libraries (based in GNM:H).

In collaboration with the partner advisors, the student will develop a summary report (with visualisations) about the presence of women donors in TWAM's world cultures collections to inform exhibition planning connected to the redisplay of the World Cultures gallery, bring to fore information/connections otherwise obscured in the catalogue, and spark ideas for further research/programming across TWAM. The development of the data-driven digital stories will be iterative to allow feedback from GNM:H/TWAM staff and audiences (where appropriate), enabling the GNM:H/TWAM teams to experiment and develop expertise in a storytelling technique they have not used before for curatorial work.

Alongside academic writing, the student will be supported to disseminate aspects of their research on the museum's blog and to deliver public talks and workshops for museum staff, TWAM/NHSN/SANT volunteers, educational groups and the public. The combination of activities afforded by this collaboration will give the opportunity to the student to develop professional skills and networks as an integral part of their PhD research.

SECTION 3: SUPERVISION AND EXTERNAL ADVISORS

Primary (or Co-) Supervisor:	Dr Areti Galani, Professor in Digital Heritage Practices
School or Department:	School of Arts and Cultures
Email Address:	
Secondary (or Co-) Supervisor:	Dr Joanne Sayner, Reader in Cultural and Memory Studies
School or Department:	School of Arts and Cultures
Email Address:	
Advisor based at the Non-HE Partner Organisation:	Joanne Anderson
Organisation/Institution:	Great North Museum: Hancock
Email Address:	
Advisor based at the Non-HE Partner Organisation:	Andrew Parkin
Organisation/Institution:	Great North Museum: Hancock
Email Address:	
Additional Internal or External Advisors or Academic Supervisors, if any:	
Name:	Dr Alex Tarr, Lecturer in Digital Cultures
Organisation/Institution:	School of Arts and Cultures
Email Address:	

Explain how the expertise of the supervisory team and external advisor(s) will allow them to support the proposed project and the selected candidate:
(Maximum 500 words)

Dr Areti Galani is Professor in Digital Heritage Practices in the School of Arts and Cultures (SACS) at Newcastle University (NU). She will be the principal supervisor drawing on her extensive experience in supervising interdisciplinary doctoral projects (including CDAs) in the intersection of heritage studies and digital communication. Areti has deployed archival research methods in the creation of digital installations for the purpose of museum audience engagement and has published on the topic of the 'dialogic museum' and the role of empathy in archive-based exhibitions. She currently coordinates research on Māori taonga in collaboration with GNM:H, Victoria University Wellington and Te Papa Museum, NZ. Areti has supervised 12 PhD students to successful on-time completion; she currently co-supervises 2 PhD students. Areti will also have an overview of the ethical dimensions of the research.

Dr Joanne Sayner is Reader in Memory and Cultural Studies in SACS at NU. She researches the politics of remembering in contemporary culture and she will bring to the project specific expertise in gender studies and the writing of women's stories through archival research and network analysis. Joanne is a co-Director of the Centre for Heritage and co-Chair of NU's partnership with the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience that aims to address social injustice and colonial legacies through heritage work. She has supervised 8 PhD students to-date to successful on-time completion; she currently co-supervises 7 PhD students.

Dr Alex Tarr is Lecturer in Digital Cultures in SACS at NU. His research focuses on the use of digital tools and practices in popular understandings of historical geographies and how they are reflected in current social and environmental justice work. He brings expertise in critical gis/cartography and has a long track-record of collaboration on Digital Humanities projects that bring together archival, institutional and ethnographic research with interactive, public-facing platforms, including the Living New Deal project, ImagineRio, and most recently, Sunset Over Sunset (in collaboration with the Getty). This will be his first opportunity to co-supervise a PhD.

Joanne Anderson is the Assistant Keeper of Archaeology at GNM:H. She has 20 years' experience of working in museums with various collections including archaeology, World Cultures, Egyptology and natural sciences. Jo has extensive exhibition experience and was lead curator for the hugely successful exhibition "Polar" at GNM:H. In 2019 Jo was awarded a Headley Trust Fellowship to study native North American collections and gain a better understanding and practise of ethnographic curatorship. As the primary TWAM/GNM:H advisor Jo will scaffold the student's engagement and training in the partner's community, facilities and collections. This will be Jo's first opportunity to co-supervise a PhD.

Andrew Parkin is Keeper of Archaeology at the GNM:H. His background is in archaeology and museum education with over 25 years' experience of working with archaeology collections. He has published many articles and book chapters on archaeological material as well as worked on museum interpretation. He has extensive experience of curating temporary exhibitions including as lead curator for the archive-based collaborative project The Extraordinary Gertrude Bell (2016). He has supervised a successful NB CDA PhD with NU co-supervisors based around the museum's Shefton Collection of Greek Archaeology.

SECTION 4: RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

Please provide details about the research environment the selected candidate will be joining and its suitability:
(Maximum 500 words)

The School of Arts and Cultures (SACS), GNM:H, and the research communities in Newcastle University (NU) and Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums (TWAM) provide the ideal research environment for this project. The student will be based in SACS and become a member of the interdisciplinary Media, Culture, Heritage (MCH) unit, which comprises researchers with internationally recognised expertise in critical heritage, museology, digital cultures, media and memory, gender studies and indigenous cultures. SACS and MCH have a well-developed support structure for PGRs, which includes seminar series, symposia and writing retreats that enable knowledge exchange and community-building. MCH PGRs share designated office and common room facilities. The MCH:RISE (MCH: Research, Impact, Scholarship and Engagement) seminars include both established academics and PGR/ECR researchers to encourage cross-fertilisations of ideas and confidence-building among new researchers. SACS holds a Bronze Athena Swan Award and has adopted an anti-racism strategic priority across its education, research and engagement activities.

MCH has a long-standing partnership with GNM:H/TWAM for the delivery of high-quality, collection-based and public-facing student projects such as exhibitions, learning activities and public events. Galani (principal supervisor) and Anderson (primary advisor) currently lead on an international collaboration between NU, Victoria University Wellington, GNM:H and Te Papa Museum, NZ to advance the research of Māori taonga in TWAM's collections. These collaborations will provide the student with learning and networking opportunities, such as auditing relevant MA-level modules, and accessing existing learning materials and international curatorial expertise (as necessary).

Beyond SACS, the student will join the interdisciplinary research communities of the Materiality, Artefacts & Technologies in Culture & History (MATCH) and Cultures of Memory Faculty Research Groups (Sayner and Galani are convenors), which organise reading groups, research seminars

and PGR support sessions. NU's Centre for Heritage (Sayner is co-director), organises regular events for ECR/PGRs and coordinates international PGR internships that advance students' skills and expertise in cultural memory work, contested heritages and dialogic praxis. The student will be encouraged to present their work-in-progress at these events. The student will engage with the Centre for Data, through attending training events, which will embed them in a community of researchers with expertise in data visualisation, AI tools and data ethics.

TWAM manages both designated collections and an accredited archives service. As a member of the GNM:H/TWAM community, the student will engage with curators from across TWAM's venues, who have extensive expertise in researching collections/collectors and the history of NE communities. The student will contribute to staff meetings and to TWAM's working group on the decolonisation of museum practices. The partner advisors will introduce the student to established national networks, such as the Museum Ethnographers Group (MEG). TWAM's documentation team will train the student in UK's museum collections management and documentation standard SPECTRUM. The student will be introduced to the GNM Librarian, who will support their research and enable them to use the resources in the Natural History Society of Northumbria (NHSN) and Society of Antiquaries (SANT) libraries confidently. The NHSN/TWAM archivists will provide access to archival material. Volunteers and Society members, particularly in NHSN, will also share collections' knowledge. Regular public talks organised by NHSN/SANT pertain to local history, scientific findings, and the life and work of individuals connected to the collections.