

Congruence Engine: Call for participation

Do you have an interest in the history of the textiles industry?

How might connecting museum collections and archives of many kinds help you to explore your interests?

Textiles offers a way of holding together threads of a global British history, creating a focus which allows for connections of all kinds to be made.

Connections between:

- everyday working life and practices, living conditions, wages, and profit;
- materials, patterns, and designs;
- skills, machinery and innovation in production techniques;
- the development of civic wealth, enslavement, and carbon;
- forms of community, political organisation, resistance, mutual aid, and solidarity.

We're looking to collaborate with people researching their family histories, or who are active in community history groups or who might be involved in research through volunteer roles:

- You might already be exploring the connections between the transatlantic slave trade, cotton, and wealth, or mapping connections between West Africa, the Americas and Lancashire.
- You might be researching a family history which has led you to textile worker ancestors, or be using archives to develop queer histories of mill workers or sites.
- You might be interested in how expertise in textile production and design traditions were taken from South Asian, or you might be exploring what it was like to move to Manchester from Ireland, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Uganda, the Caribbean, Somalia or other parts of the world and start working in a mill.
- You might be tracking the development of anti-racism activism and its connections to trade unionism in mills, or exploring how trade unionism changed over time, or how women's pay and conditions were fought for.
- You might be interested in the changing production techniques and uses of different textile products.
- Equally you may be interested in something else textiles-related that forges new links and opens up new historical understandings.

What would your participation look like?

This call for participation is part of the [Congruence Engine](#) project. We are a project that is looking to connect collections and archives of industrial heritage – paper archives, pictures, maps, museum objects, films and broadcasts - together to help tell new histories. To do this, we are looking at creating digital techniques to connect heritage collections in dialogue with live historical research.

We'd like to work alongside you to set agendas for Congruence Engine and see how digital approaches might help you uncover new stories and new perspectives on what Britain was and is and inspire new perspectives on what we might become.

We would be asking you to attend a workshop in October in Manchester to participate in discussions about your interests.

By the end of the workshop, we will have created a new set of research questions and inquiries. We are looking for people who are happy to help develop research questions at the workshop and those who are potentially interested in a longer-term collaboration to pursue their research in collaboration with the project. (We will also be looking at the energy and communications sectors.) Both ways of getting involved are encouraged!

Get in touch

If this sounds like something you would be interested in, please get in contact with Helen Graham on h.graham@leeds.ac.uk and Arran Rees on a.j.rees@leeds.ac.uk. We'll be more than happy to answer any questions you have.

More on Congruence Engine

The Congruence Engine project is a three-year, Arts and Humanities Research Council funded project, funded under the Towards a National Collections programme and led by the Science Museum Group, in collaboration with over 20 other partners.

For more information about the project, including a project blog, please visit <https://www.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/project/the-congruence-engine/>

For more information on the Towards a National Collection programme, please visit <https://www.nationalcollection.org.uk/>