**PhD Studentship (AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Partnership Award)**

**John Forster (1812-76) and the Making of Victorian Literature**

The University of York and the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) in London are seeking applications for one fully funded PhD studentship. Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, this three-year PhD research programme will offer the award-holder a unique opportunity to undertake original research leading to a PhD while gaining exposure to both one of the UK’s leading universities and one of the world’s great museums. The studentship will begin in October 2015.

Deadline for applications: Thursday 30 April. Interviews will be Monday 18 May.

**The Project**

The student will explore the role of John Forster (1812-1876), a major figure in nineteenth-century literary culture whose writing, criticism and entrepreneurship placed him at the heart of the changes that took place in the Victorian literary marketplace. Through his networks of friendship and advice with major authors such as Dickens and Browning; as editor of *The Examiner*, the most influential radical periodical of the period; as author of literary biographies and contributor to many important journals; and as literary adviser to the publishers Chapman and Hall, Forster played a leading role in the creation and reception of nineteenth-century fiction, drama and poetry, and changed decisively the possibilities and ethos of the modern literary profession.

John Forster was also a major donor to the V&A, gifting it one of its most renowned collections in the form of his extensive library, which included the manuscripts of most of Dickens’s novels, together with a treasure-house of letters, proofs and contracts, as well as a library ‘so large …that it is difficult to do justice to the range of material’ (V&A website). The Forster collection is the world's single most important collection of Dickens materials, but this is just the tip of a large iceberg, and can overshadow the role played by Forster himself in creating Victorian literature and culture as editor and entrepreneur. Despite his centrality to British literary life for almost half a century, the shaping influence of the gifts of his library, artworks and theatre collection to the V&A, and the immense popular influence of his *Life of Dickens* (1872-4), he is a figure now known mainly by specialists. Forster’s roles as author and literary entrepreneur on the one hand, and collector and donor on the other, have been rarely explored together. This project seeks both to understand Forster’s complex, shaping role in the dynamic and often conflicted world of Victorian literary culture and to bring that understanding to new publics.

The V&A’s Forster collection shows how his close friendships (with Dickens, Charles Lamb, Leigh Hunt, Browning, Carlyle, Tennyson, Bulwer Lytton and others) and such professional organisations as the Guild of Literature and Art, played important roles in the creation of what Robert L. Patten has recently called ‘the birth of the Industrial-Age Author’. There is an immensely rich archive of material and, while we would give clear direction to the student about the project’s overall structure and interdisciplinary parameters, we encourage him or her to be creative and original in exploring Forster’s work and in defining the most suggestive and dynamic aspects to explore for twenty-first century readers and publics.

As we approach the 150th anniversary of Dickens’s death in 2020, this project will aim to begin to do justice both to the remarkable man behind the Dickens holdings in the V&A and to the project of literary professionalism and cultural preservation that underlies them.

**Supervision**

The PhD will be jointly supervised by Professor John Bowen (Department of English & Related Literature, University of York) and Professor Bill Sherman (Head of Research at the V&A).

The student will be expected to be primarily based at York and participate in the flourishing research culture of the English department and the Humanities Research Centre there, but he or she will also be a part of the research environment at the V&A and receive appropriate professional training and guidance in working with the Museum’s collections.

**Funding**

Applications are welcome from Students from the UK and the EU.

The studentship will cover home fees (full time) and a stipend for UK students or EU students who have lived in the UK for three years prior to the award.

The stipend rate for 2015/16 is £14,052. The student will also be eligible for an extra £550 per year CDP allowance, in addition to (up to) £1,000 per year from the V&A to cover research and travel costs.

Applicants may be full-time or part-time; for part-time students, the stipend rate will be adjusted accordingly.

**How to Apply**

Applicants should submit an application for the PhD in English via the York Select system   (<http://www.york.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/courses/apply?course=DRPENGSENG3>). Please ensure that you complete the application in full, including a personal statement, research proposal, academic transcripts and CV. Please indicate in your application that you want to be considered for the CDA project ‘John Forster and the Making of Victorian Literature’. In addition, please email Professor Bowen ([john.bowen@york.ac.uk](mailto:john.bowen@york.ac.uk)) to confirm that you wish to be considered for this CDA project. Please include in your email to him a statement (approx. 500 words) that indicates why you wish to be considered for this particular Collaborative Doctoral project, and why you feel you would be an especially suitable candidate for it.

Applicants will normally be expected to have obtained a first- or upper second-class honours degree or equivalent and to have completed (or be about to complete) an MA in a relevant subject.