

ROYAL ACADEMY OF DANCE

The History of the RAD Library

The Beginning

Our earliest library records show that in 1924, the Academy received a number of rare and valuable dance books from the estate of the late Rev. Stewart Headlam, marking the inception of its library collection. The first 'Operatic Association' (as the RAD was then called) *Gazette*, published in 1930, contained an article highlighting the library and its availability to members.

Over the years, the library has grown through generous donations and bequests from individuals and organizations, including Philip Richardson, Mark E. Perugini, Hylida Brown, Audrey Lloyd, Beth Weyms, Ivor Guest, Rachel Cameron, the Philip Loubser Foundation, and Clement Crisp.

In the 1940s, following the introduction of the Teachers Training Course (TTC) and the purchase of Fairfield Lodge as a headquarters, books were acquired specifically for use in the 'students' library'.

The Margot Fonteyn Archives

In the 1950s Margot Fonteyn and Arnold Haskell launched an appeal for archive material through the pages of the *Gazette*. As a gesture of support, Haskell donated his personal collection of programmes and his photographic archives to the Academy as a wedding gift to Fonteyn. Haskell's editorial in the August 1956 issue of *Gazette* further encouraged readers to donate or bequeath items to help expand what was then known as 'The Margot Fonteyn Archives'.

In 1960, Ifan Kyrle Fletcher was commissioned to provide a complete listing and valuation of the Academy's collection of "Books, Playbills, Programmes, Manuscripts, Autograph Letters, Prints, Drawings, Photographs, Relics, Etc."

The Philip Richardson Collection

Following the death of Philip Richardson in 1963, the Academy received his personal library of rare and valuable dance books. A library fund was established in 1964, and in April of that year the Working Committee considered it "desirable that the Academy should build up a comprehensive library which would be available to serious research

students". They also recognized the need to appoint a librarian to manage the growing collection.

An Archive of National Importance

In 1967 the Academy purchased 'South Lodge' in Knightsbridge and Margot Fonteyn outlined her vision for the for the new building which included:

"...a small museum, where some of the many treasures in the way of costumes, programmes and photographs at present in the Academy's possession could be shown to advantage. A library, where the Stewart Headlam and Philip Richardson bequests could be housed and made available to scholars from all over the world."

Later that year, Clement Crisp was appointed as 'Honorary Librarian Archivist' and in the Spring 1969 issue of the *Dance Gazette*, expressed his hopes of building an archive of national importance at the new premises.

The Philip Richardson Library

South Lodge was sold in 1970, and new premises purchased in Battersea. The new Library at Battersea headquarters was named in honour of Philip Richardson, who not only started the library by bequeathing his rare books but is also founder of the whole Academy. Throughout the 1970s the library collection continued to grow, prompting the appointment of an assistant Librarian. The Teacher Training College became 'The College of the RAD', leading to extended library hours to better serve students.

In 1980 the library underwent complete re-classification and expanded its role as both a research facility and a daily resource for the College students. In 1984, the library's collection was significantly enriched by the GBL Wilson bequest, which included an archive of approximately 50,000 photographs. In 1988 the first full-time Resident Librarian was appointed and in 1989, following a major refurbishment, the Philip Richardson Library officially re-opened in a new, larger space within the building.

The Keith Lester Reading Room

In the 1990s library fees were introduced at the same time as the College's first degree course received validation from the University of Durham. Thanks to a donation by Keith Lester (head of the Teacher-Training Course/College between 1964 and 1975) a Reading Room for the students was established and additional funds allocated to expand the book collection for the College. Almost two decades later, alumni of the Teacher Training Course, who had been taught by Lester gifted a commemorative

sign for the Keith Lester Reading Room to honour their teacher. This sign is now preserved in the archives.

Benesh Movement Notation Scores

In 1997 our unique collection of Benesh Movement Notation scores was acquired, following the merger of the Benesh Institute (now Benesh International) with the Academy. Over 500 of these scores are available to browse in the Library and we continue to collaborate closely with Benesh International to facilitate access to and awareness of Benesh Movement Notation.

Growing Services

In 1999, the Library introduced services for distance learners and implemented library management software, providing an online library catalogue. During this time, some of the books from the Richardson Collection were sold, prompting concerns from individuals and societies focused on historical and theatrical studies, regarding the dispersal of the collection and the removal of these works overseas.

By 2000, the College had become the 'Faculty of Education' with changes to degree, diploma and certificate programmes. The Library expanded its academic support and services for the growing number of faculty programmes, staff and students. A Library subscription scheme launched in 2005 which enabled books to be borrowed by external users for the first time. Digitisation of the GBL Wilson photographic archive began in 2007, and the images are available through [Arenapal](#), who specialise in the licensing of performing arts images.

Putting on a Display

Archive staff started being asked to create small displays of material from the collections at various RAD events. This soon led to accompanying exhibition boards being printed, the acquisition of a display case to house objects in the reception area and a cabinet to showcase Fonteyn's costumes from *Swan Lake* and *Ondine* in the Fonteyn Centre at Battersea Square.

On Point: Royal Academy of Dance at 100, was a free display celebrating the RAD's centenary, which ran from 02 December 2020 to 29 August 2022 at the V&A Museum in London. This collaboration featured costumes, designs, photographs and more from both the RAD's archive and the V&A's Theatre & Performance Collection, tracing the RAD's story from its foundation to its global impact on ballet and dance. Original ballet costumes and accessories worn by RAD founders and presidents were displayed, along with 60 original objects and over 80 supporting archival images. Other items included busts and sculptures, sketches and

drawings, as well as letters, posters, programmes, audio-visual footage and some original photographs.

A New Home and a New Name

In February 2022 the Library and Archives was the first department to move into RAD's new headquarters on York Road, Battersea. The new library features spacious shelving for resources, a group study room, and abundant natural light, making it a popular study space for Faculty of Education students, RAD staff, and local residents. The archives and special collections are now stored in a dedicated archive room, with many items from the collections displayed throughout the building for visitors to enjoy.

Previously named in honour of Philip Richardson, the Library space has been renamed to recognize a grant to the RAD from the Wolfson Foundation. Founded by Sir Isaac and Lady Edith Wolfson who believed that the creation and sharing of knowledge are the building blocks of a healthy society, the Foundation is a great supporter of the arts and education in the UK, and we are thrilled to receive their backing.

Remembering Richardson

Philip Richardson's significant contribution to the founding of the RAD in 1920, and to dance writing, is commemorated in the new library through the Philip Richardson archive collection. This includes his typewriter,* rare and valuable dance books from his personal library, and historic documents, press cuttings and illustrations related to his research on social dance in England. The new space includes a cozy corner adorned with soft furnishings and featuring a bookcase* that belonged to Richardson, which we are thrilled to display for the first time.

The Future

The Library has continued to expand its resources to support Faculty programmes and to ensure the general reference collections stay up to date. The Academy archives are being systematically rationalised, with ongoing efforts to enhance the details of the collections and improve access through digitisation. The Dancing Times Photographic Archive was purchased with a grant from the Linbury Trust and is currently in the cataloguing process.

An archive catalogue and database are being developed to enable comprehensive searching of all collections, which will be accessible online in the future.

*Both typewriter and bookcase were kindly gifted to the Library and Archive by the Dancing Times.

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