Impact template (REF3a)

Institution: Plymouth University

Unit of Assessment: 34

a. Context

Research in the unit aims to maximise its impact through strategic collaborations with arts organisations, galleries, archives and publishers with a remit of public interaction with culture. Additionally original research within the unit at Plymouth concerned with innovative approaches to knowledge exchange impacts on the work of these collaborating agencies. Examples of these collaborations include the Institute for Digital Art and Technology (i-DAT) which has Arts Council National Portfolio status and has worked on a number of projects with Plymouth City Council, and ICCI (Innovation for Creative and Cultural Industries) which staged an extensive variety of large scale public events as a major component of the LOCOG Cultural Olympiad attracting 25000+ visitors and working with 135 lead artists and 41 creative sector organisations.

The unit has significant experience of collaborations with external partners as demonstrated by our work with 3rd sector curators and publishers, e.g. Chandler's work with SteidelMack and the Imperial War Museum, i-Dat's work with the Cheltenham Science Festival, Phillips's work with the Fulldome Festival, and Punt's Transtechnology work with International Panoramic Society that engaged new non-specialist audiences for research into film studies. Strategic cross-disciplinary collaborations are furthered through a series of agreements with non-academic arts organisations (Effervescence, Karst, FotoNow, NomDe Strip, South West Film & Television archive) working with the unit on projects to maximise impact to new and often underrepresented communities.

Across the range of research in the unit at Plymouth there is evidence of a spectrum of impact strategies as an intrinsic part of the research design. In common with norms across the Art & Design sector the main beneficiaries of research are identified as a broad socio/economic group whose life experience is enriched through engagement with the outputs. Emphasis on broad engagement is endemic in the unit since dissemination and 'publication' is invariably a highly capitalised activity that frequently relies on public subsidy. Thus considerable attention is given in the planning and evaluation of research dissemination and its impacts across a demographic spectrum ranging from the very young to the older adult.

b. Approach to impact

The impact of research in the unit is characterised by four interrelated approaches:

1. Public engagement where the impact is inherent in the research design. This may be (i) an ongoing iterative process as, for example, in the HERA/TEF project in which a series of public interfaces inform and contribute to a concluding Knowledge Exchange event; (ii) a significant influence on the iterative research process over a series of discrete research projects as in the i-DAT National Portfolio project, or (iii) a design concept in the development of research themes in collaboration with established communicators in arts centres etc. (e.g. Planetary Collegium's peripatetic conference programme, especially in deprived and emerging global communities).

2. Research projects in collaboration with third sector creative industry agencies. This includes (i) "curatorial publishers" who meet cultural needs such as high quality photographic books (Chandler, Southam, Morstang, Wells); (ii) public facing research in collaboration with archives that prioritise access (Southam, Morstang, Punt, Blassnigg, Phillips); or (iii) research engagement with cultural heritage partners in bringing original research into the impact imperatives of the sector (Punt, Blassnigg, Blackshaw).

3. Research and delivery concerned primarily with innovative approaches to publishing which has a cultural, policy and economic impact (e.g. experimental publishing in collaboration with Dallas University, MIT Press, Open Access innovations, British Library)

4. Innovative curatorial approaches that widen access to findings to non-academics and enhance culture. (e.g. Blackshaw's work with Mental Health communities as part of her Madness and

Modernity project, which produced new frameworks to successfully attract new audiences, Wells' work with the British Antarctic Survey in Landscapes of Exploration, Phillips's use of online environments to engage new and virtual communities, and Morstangs work exhibited to public audiences in Norway in collaboration with the Norwegian embassy).

We have invested in collaborative partnerships that nurture art/science projects. Examples are our Immersive Vision Theatre for the visualisation of art research and a public arts facility, Peninsula Arts, that acts as a gateway between the unit and the local audiences and engages the community with exhibitions of staff research and an integral programme of events designed to enable visitors access to the nature of the exhibitions including: lunchtime and evening gallery talks, educational events of schools' visits and workshops, teachers' packs, exhibition catalogues, weekend family activities, and, more occasionally, festivals. This partnership strategy has brought in public financial support for individual research projects (e.g. from Arts Council, Research Councils, ESF/HERA, Plymouth City Council). Collaborative projects with galleries, councils, and archives) include those with the National Portrait Gallery (NPG), The Eye Film Institute (Amsterdam), The Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision (Hilversum), and Documenta. In the cases of projects such as Blackshaw's work with the NPG, i-DAT (Phillips), and HERA/TEF (Punt, Blassnigg) in Vienna the costs of project and dissemination design and funding has been supplemented with support from the University.

Response and evaluation of our research is a key means of assessing its impact. Peninsula Arts conducts footfall and impact audits for all its activities. These results are then factored into its programme planning and inform decision making within the unit. Frequently the effect and impact of publicised research is used as a discrete starting point for new research as, for example, in the development of a new KT project drawing on research undertaken into user centred perception of film (HERA). It can also be an integral element in the iterative processes of research development as in the case of touring exhibitions, on-line publications or public participation projects. The relationships and interactions developed through its collaborations with other disciplines and institutions have resulted in major funding applications in partnerships with neuroscientists, medical scientists, film and photography archives, schools, colleges and environmental groups both locally and internationally.

The unit has specifically supported and enabled staff to achieve impact from their research through financially supported dissemination strategies, and in commissioning research to identify potential partners in the public sector to engage in the dissemination of research outputs. It also provides publicity through the University press office and in a more focused way through a dedicated Arts Marketing unit.

The University Research and Innovation unit provides support and advice in grant development including strategic support for pathways to impact. For example the university has made considerable resources available to explore new methodological approaches to research and impact by financing, through its International Research and Networking Scheme, a substantial research network into transdisciplinarity The unit has benefited from three substantial funds from the University under its IRNC initiative for impact (Cook, Morstang and Punt) These have resulted in gallery exhibitions (Cook, Morstang) and grey literature on transdisciplinarity and public participation for the National Science Foundation (Punt).

c. Strategy and plans

The research centres (MADr and HuMPA) take as one of their concerns the impact of the research they support through the QR Bidding process. In the census period substantial sums have been awarded to projects that have a significant impact in one or more of the numbered categories above. Its key strategy is to collaborate with non-academic partners who have a significant interest in raising the impact of their organisation (e.g. archives, galleries, arts centres) and who recognise the virtues, significance and innovation of the unit's research. The mutual imperatives of the researchers and the organisations are increasingly inscribed in formal contracts and external funding bids. To underpin this strategy a new appointment of Head of School at Professorial level

carries with it Associate Dean responsibility for Creative Industries This has enabled a clear linkage between research concerns and engagement with non-academic external partners.

To respond to the external imperative of innovation and knowledge exchange the unit has invested heavily in cross-disciplinary collaborations as a strategy to widen the reach of its research beyond the usual disciplinary audiences, and to reach new constituencies through other disciplines. It has supported this strategy through senior research appointments that have a cross-disciplinary remit, including Professors of Photographic Culture (Wells), Interdisciplinary Arts (Phillips), Art and Technology (Punt), and Readerships in the Anthropology of Media (Blassnigg), Art and Sound (Grant), Science and Art (Robinson). It has formalised partnerships with scientific Research Institutes at Plymouth to facilitate this (Marine Institute, Cognition Institute).

External consultation has also been a strategically funded priority for practice based research that is primarily exhibited. The unit has invested in the expertise of independent curators to advise on the design of research projects to maximise their impact (Bronac, Feran), has funded residencies to support and extend the approaches to dissemination (Cook, Roulstone) and has a specific research community concerned with regional and national engagement with modernist arts research projects (Blackshaw). The unit invests in and supports all aspects of the University funded Knowledge Exchange conduit under the rubric of Peninsula Arts contributing to research into innovative programming, providing original and engaging content and working with the curatorial teams to maintain primary contact with trends in the sector.

We have a strategic aim to maximise the impact of emerging speculative research that is primarily published. To this end, the Unit has built collaborative links with established major international publishers that aim at a reach beyond the academic community. This has involved links with Amsterdam University Press (Blassnigg) working with the non-academic series, and MIT Press through collaborations with *Leonardo*. The unit also supports *Varoom*, *Leonardo Reviews Quarterly* and *Leonardo Reviews,* which are communication journals for the non-specialist. The unit is extending the reach of publishing – creative solutions to new opportunities for cost neutral production and distribution in order to engage with non-academic communities.

d. Relationship to case studies
The first of the two case studies comprises the impact of the National Portfolio funded 'Operating Systems' research which has as an inherent design feature, impact evaluation and conditional expectations attached to its funding. This deploys a hybrid approach large in categories 1 and 2 of the approach (above). The second case is the 'Madness and Modernity' project that brought new scientific findings by art historians to a constituency primarily garnered by the funders (Wellcome) in collaboration with publicly funded venues. These two case studies are exemplary of the overall approach and the future strategy of the unit, which is to work collaboratively with a number of agencies for whom public impact is an imperative. They are exemplary in that the first proceeds from practice and action to invite reflection from participating audiences, The second was initially underpinned by orthodox academic research that was developed in collaboration with an established agency in order to draw in non-specialist participation.

Impact is monitored at Research Centre and Faculty level. Reflection on the successes and problems of these two highly successful cases has been especially central to the iterative revision of our strategy and approach to impact. They contribute to the discussion and dissemination of best practice across the unit and specific examples of research that has been shaped by these reflections are Knowledge Exchange projects undertaken by Vaughan, Wells, and Punt.