

<b>Institution: University of South Wales</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: D35</b>
<b>Title of case study:</b> Storytelling and Community (Case study 3)
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>The George Ewart Evans Centre for Storytelling (GEECS) is the only UK academic research centre devoted to the study of storytelling and its applications. Our research has supported the development and renewed public awareness of storytelling as a powerful, democratic art form. The impact of our storytelling research is both cultural and social as it has generated new understandings of community formation, connectivity and capacity through creative participation. Collaboration with 16 national, international and local partners since 2008 enables the impact of our research to secure both a wide reach within civil society and attain real significance within local communities.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>GEECS was founded at what was then the University of Glamorgan (UoG) in April 2005 by Professors Fyfe (2004 – present) and Wilson (1997 – 2010), with an internal grant in recognition of their expertise and reputation in the field of storytelling. Wilson's expertise lies in the field of popular and vernacular performance and his academic research is greatly enriched by the 15 years he spent working as a professional storyteller, actor, director and writer in community theatre. His research has documented the resurgence of storytelling and has led him to work on the interface between storytelling and digital technology and the way in which the internet has enabled the telling and sharing of 'extraordinary' stories of the everyday experiences of people. Fyfe has expertise in community theatre and community arts more broadly. His research has provided powerful arguments for understanding storytelling as a creative practice that cuts across the arts, enhancing understanding and empowerment of diverse individuals and groups in society. Through both traditional academic published research and commissioned reports for bodies such as Arts Council Wales (see 3 and Fyfe REF2), his research has revealed how storytelling and its analysis provides us with powerful ways of understanding the everyday knowledge and ways of life of our fellow human beings, many of whose voices are not routinely heard in our society. Inspired by the Centre's namesake's collection of oral history, Fyfe and Wilson's research has brought together evidence from an eclectic range of sources including historical and folkloric studies, community regeneration, performance, and health discourses (see 3). However, their research has also been alive to the new opportunities afforded by digital storytelling and its capacity to offer people both the opportunity to learn new skills and literacies whilst also generating compelling first person stories that help individuals and organisations communicate with a global audience (see Fyfe REF 2).</p> <p>This research led GEECS to become a key partner in the establishment of Storyworks in 2009 (<a href="http://www.storyworksglam.co.uk/index.html">http://www.storyworksglam.co.uk/index.html</a>). Storyworks undertakes consultancy and research in the field of narrative and storytelling with a particular focus on public services research. It has received commissions from more than 20 organisations (e.g. Equalities and Human Rights Commission, Newport Social Services, Aneurin Bevan Health Board) to create digital, multi-media narratives. Karen Lewis was recruited to lead the unit from the BBC, where she was producer of the BBC's award-winning Digital Storytelling Project, <a href="#">Capture Wales</a>. Storyworks fully realised its potential in 2013 as a spin-out that now operates as a commercially-independent business, generating economic prosperity, and applying insights from GEECS research to public service and cultural sectors, whilst maintaining close links with GEECS. Lewis has since become co-director of GEECS with Fyfe, completing her MRes in 2012.</p> <p>Fyfe and Wilson's storytelling research has responded to the knowledge transfer and catalyst agendas. For example, in 2009 Wilson and Fyfe received a £184,000 grant from the Technology Strategy Board to undertake collaborative work with the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) to unearth and preserve the history of local cricket clubs (see 5.1). Alongside published academic research, a MCC website (<a href="http://www.takingthefield.com/">http://www.takingthefield.com/</a>) and museum display were curated to ensure that the research had reach and significance both within and outside the academy. GEECS' research has</p>

made an important cultural impact on the revival and development of storytelling as both a performance practice and a means for better understanding individuals and communities across society. It has shared its findings with a wide range of stakeholders thereby influencing civil society, public discourse and policy making.

**3. References to the research**

1. Fyfe, H. (2003) *'She Danced and We Danced': Artists, Creativity and Education*. Belfast: The Stranmillis Press.  
*Evidence of quality: This monograph emerges from research undertaken in Northern Ireland and was influential in establishing its Devolved Government's culture policy.*
2. Wilson, M. (2005) *Storytelling and Theatre* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan  
*Evidence of quality: supported by an AHRB award, this monograph is widely used in storytelling and drama teaching in universities throughout the UK and was submitted to RAE 2008 in UoA65.*
3. Fyfe, H. (2005) 'Changing Spaces - Building Social Capital in Wales through Cross-Sector Creativity', Welsh Assembly Government ISBN 1-84054-124-5  
*Evidence of quality: Submitted to RAE2008, this Welsh Assembly Government-funded report was commissioned by the Assembly's Culture and Welsh Language Committee to identify and evaluate the impact of working across sectors in education, health, social inclusion and regeneration of communities to support the varied application of the socially-engaged arts.*
4. Wilson, M. (2008) 'Tale-enders: Gathering the Oral Narrative Heritage of Welsh Cricket', *Journal of the Inclusive Museum*, 1:3, pp.83-90  
*Evidence of quality: Article in peer-reviewed international journal emerging from research supported by an AHRC award.*
5. Fyfe, H. Wilson, M. Rose, M. Meadows, D. Lewis, K. and Pratt, S. (2009) 'A Public Voice: Access, Digital Story and Interactive Narrative' in *A Collaborative Journey: The BBC/AHRC Knowledge Exchange Pilot Programme*, BBC/AHRC. ISBN 9781626204201.  
*Evidence of quality: this report was commissioned and widely distributed by BBC nationally. Hard copies provided on request.*
6. Wilson, M. (2009) 'It's beyond Candide – it's Švejk' – Wise Foolery in the Work of Jack Lynch, Storyteller' in Sara Brady and Fintan Walsh (eds.), *Crossroads: Performance Studies and Irish Culture*, Palgrave, pp.45-57.  
*Evidence of quality: Chapter examining orality and performance in the figure of the storyteller in peer-reviewed edited book.*

**4. Details of the impact**

The Centre's storytelling research has made a significant and wide-reaching impact on civil society and cultural life by taking storytelling (in all its diverse forms) out into a range of communities and organisations. Our research has helped enrich the lives and imaginations of the people and organisations with whom we have worked, providing them with opportunities for personal expression and creativity. Our strong collaborative ethos of working in partnership with diverse social organisations and charities, often at grass roots level, has been central to our ability to bring about change through renewed understanding of different lives and voices. In the process, our research has also delivered tangible educational and economic benefits by transferring technical skills from our research centre to the citizens and communities with whom we have worked. Rooted in the conviction that storytelling is a creative practice that can have a positive impact on quality of life and mutual understanding in civil society, our research has also had an impact in policy-making by both providing powerful evidence of the effects of policy decisions and debates on the lives of ordinary people, and by advocating for the value of creative arts practice as a process that helps build individual and community assets, by fostering social inclinations and skills critical to civic renewal. Details of the impact are best indicated through examination of some of GEECS's collaborative outputs and how they ensure the reach and significance of the above research.

**Impact case study (REF3b)****Impact: Public Services.**

The 'Who Do You Think I Am?' project applies Fyfe's research on the benefits of participation in the arts (see for example 3.1 3.3 and Fyfe REF 2), making an impact by improving the delivery of public services for homeless people whilst promoting an understanding of disadvantaged and marginalised individuals. It was a collaborative project carried out in 2010, led by Fyfe for GEECS, in collaboration with British Telecom, Boomerang TV, Cube Interactive and Cardiff Y.M.C.A Housing Association, which resulted in six short films (<http://vimeo.com/40769899>) created using the stories of homeless people at the Cardiff YMCA Housing Association. Who Do You Think I Am? was funded by a grant of £44,715 from the Welsh Assembly Government demonstrating the interest in Fyfe's research among policy makers. The project had a direct impact on vulnerable young people's opportunities and ability to imagine a better future. As well as the benefits for the young people involved, this project helped professionals and organisations better understand and meet the needs of vulnerable people. (See 5.2).

**Impact: Economic Prosperity and Education.**

Communities 2.0 (C2.0) (<http://GeorgeEwartEvansCentreforStorytelling.tumblr.com/>) is funded with a £6.4M ERDF/Welsh Assembly Government grant and works in areas of social and economic deprivation. This project, led by Fyfe and Lewis, ensures the impact of much of the Centre's research around the benefits of participation in storytelling and digital arts for improving the employability of the digitally excluded and enabling participation in civic and economic life (see for example 3.1, 3.3 and 3.5). It has enabled over 22,231 individuals and 232 community groups to become digitally literate, better accessing civic and consumer life, becoming less isolated and improving their employability. The initiative is a collaboration between GEECS, Wales Co-operative Centre, Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services, and Carmarthenshire County Council and runs from 2008 to 2014. The Centre's team have been directly responsible for disseminating best practice in digital creativity and passing on skills to demographic groups likely to be excluded, for example, the long-term unemployed and the elderly. GEECS have also provided public conferences, seminars and research events to ensure the work reaches policy makers, community organisations and other stakeholders (see 5.3).

**Impact: Public Discourse.**

GEECS research has had a significant impact on extending the range and improving the quality of evidence and argument to enhance public understanding of climate change. Fyfe, Wilson and Lewis's research on how storytelling can be employed to assist in understanding the impact of flooding has had a global reach (see for example Fyfe and Wilson's paper at the UN conference 'Dealing with Disaster' (11 – 12 Nov 2009) hosted by the Nepal Government (<http://www.dealing-with-disasters.org.uk>) and Lewis et al's 'Archiving memories of changing flood risk: interdisciplinary explorations around knowledge for resilience' (2013), *Journal of Arts and Communities*, 4 (1-2), pp. 46 – 75.). Lewis's work on Project Aspect ([www.projectaspect.org](http://www.projectaspect.org)) ensures the research into the benefits of storytelling for understanding climate change continues to have an impact on national and international environmental policy. Project Aspect is a pilot project funded by the AHRC and carried out by GEECS in collaboration with University College Falmouth and White Loop between 2011 and 2013; the research curated stories of climate change, and presented these through digital media aimed directly at influencing public debate, understanding and policy. Research findings have been presented to senior staff at the Government Department of Energy and Climate Change and have been acknowledged as leading in the field of climate change communication (see 5.4). The findings of Project Aspect are disseminated at international conferences (e.g. 'People and the Planet' July 2013, RMIT University, Melbourne, and 'Transatlantic Solutions to Sea Level Rise Adaptation: Moving Beyond the Threat' October 2013, Old Dominion University, Virginia) ensuring the impact continues and has a global reach.

**Impact: Policy Making and Civil Society.**

Commissioned research projects, reports and published articles by GEECS have provided direct benefit and impact for government, NGOs and charities informing and influencing policy debate and practice and illuminating cultural values and assumptions (see 3.3). Fyfe's reports 'Arts and Public Engagement' and 'Hand and Hand' for Arts Council of Wales (ACW) have been presented to the Culture Committee of the Welsh Assembly Government, where Fyfe was an invited speaker.

'Hand in Hand' has provided evidence for ACW planning and policy which has led to over 5000 young people having greater access to and participation in arts and culture (see 5.6). Fyfe's 'Changing Spaces' report (see 3.3) was debated in the full Welsh Assembly and is acknowledged as being influential in bringing about a number of cross-sectoral initiatives such as the current collaboration between the Departments of Health and Culture on developing the Arts in Health in Wales. Fyfe et al's research on BBC Wales (see 3.5) has been presented widely through BBC Wales (see 5.8) and has also had an impact on Digital Storytelling Practitioners and other artists enhancing the creation of cultural capital to enrich and expand the lives, imaginations and sensibilities of individuals and groups.

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

### For evidence regarding Taking the Field

1. Final Report for Technology Strategy Board and grading letter.  
*The project was assessed as "Very Good" by the Technology Strategy Board.*

### For evidence regarding Who do You Think I Am?

2. Letter from Cardiff YMCA Housing Association *"a positive and innovative way of working with homeless people, giving a voice to one so often neglected"*.

### For evidence regarding Communities 2.0

3. The Evaluation of Communities 2.0 – Interim Evaluation Report Available online:  
<http://wales.gov.uk/about/aboutresearch/social/latestresearch/communities/?lang=en>.  
*"those participating in the Programme... show far higher levels of digital inclusion after participation than the population in these areas as a whole."*

### For evidence regarding Project Aspect

4. "The 'art' of climate change communication", Adam Corner, [theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com), 18 March 2013. Available online: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/sustainable-business/art-climate-change-communication>.  
*"What's interesting about the Aspects approach is that while the medium appeals on a cultural level – films, storytelling, and anecdotes about the world around us – the films are also putting into practice good principles of climate change communication"*

### For evidence regarding Hand in Hand and Arts and Public Engagement reports

5. Letter from Director of Engagement and Participation, Arts Council of Wales.  
*"We used the evidence from the report in the business plan we submitted to DCELLs (then DfES) to be considered as a partner in the ESF funded Reach the Heights programme. Our bid was successful and as a result, from 2007 -2013 we managed an ESF programme that distributed circa £7 million to over 70 projects in the convergence area of Wales. The projects involved over 5000 young people [...]"*
6. Minutes of the Welsh Assembly Government Arts Strategy Board, Thursday 8 May 2008. Available at <http://wales.gov.uk/depc/meetings/culturesport/artsboard/080508/minutese.doc?lang=en>  
*Note direct references to Hand in Hand (paragraph 5.3) and A Public Voice (paragraph 5.3).*

### For further evidence regarding A Public Voice

7. Letter from Creative Arts Wales *"The investigation in the report into how digital storytellers make use of social technology to support their activities made me question my own research...."*
8. "The Power of 8", 29 June 2009. Available online:  
[http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/knowledgeexchange/2009/06/the\\_power\\_of\\_8.html](http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/knowledgeexchange/2009/06/the_power_of_8.html)  
*"It has shown that deep level academic analyses of BBC services are of incredible value to both the BBC and its audiences. It provides a key to unlocking the full business potential of digital media and has the potential to reshape how we deliver future content, in ways we can all be a part of."*

### For further information regarding the general work of GEECS

9. Letter from Beyond the Border, Cardiff.  
*"as a respected expert in the Arts in Society, Professor Fyfe is able to bring a breadth of experience to the Board."*