

Impact template (REF3a)

Institution: University of Portsmouth

Unit of Assessment: 29 English Language and Literature

a. Context

The **types of impact** that research across this UoA generates can be described as:

- Preserving, interpreting and presenting cultural heritage to enhance its value to society;
- Creating, inspiring and supporting new forms of literary expression;
- Developing stimuli to tourism and contributing to the quality of the tourist experience;
- Contributing to economic prosperity through museums and tourism;
- Informing and influencing policies and practices through the provision of expert advice;
- Enhancing awareness of societal issues, such as literacy and homelessness.

And, through these, **significant benefits are delivered to:**

- Cultural institutions and actors, including museums, and societies;
- Public bodies, including local and regional government organisations;
- Local non-governmental organisations, particularly those concerned with community tourism;
- The general public.

Researchers in this UoA are members of the Centre for Studies in Literature (CSL) that promotes research excellence in the broad area of literary studies and associated disciplines. Research and associated impact activities in CSL focus on three core fields that are reflected in three key 'Clusters': Early Modern Literature, Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture, and Twentieth and Twenty-First Century British and American Literature.

b. Approach to impact

CSL's approach to impact has been multi-dimensional and collaborative, and focused primarily on Public Engagement. Recognising the importance of impact underpinned by high-quality research, shortly after its formation in 2009, CSL's Director, Deputy Director, and cluster leaders assessed its members' research strengths, existing and forthcoming publications and projects, and identified areas of potential impact. They explored potential partnerships with the local community, as well as the possibility of internal collaboration within the University, and also sought faculty support to facilitate the organisation of impact events, publications for a non-specialist readership, and the production of non-academic websites. In addition, they identified significant local Council strategies (e.g. Portsmouth City Council's project to promote Portsmouth as *The Home of Great Writing* aimed at improving tourism and literacy), and important literary events, such as the Dickens bicentenary, that would contribute to the 2012 Cultural Olympiad, to ensure that the impact of existing and forthcoming research would be maximised.

Taking these contexts into account, since 2009, CSL members have concentrated on two key topics for impact purposes: Victorian Literary Heritage and Crime Writing. These topics provided the maximum potential for extending the reach, and enriching the significance, of high-quality research in relevant areas, due to the (then) forthcoming Dickens bicentenary, the recent Tennyson bicentenary, and the permanent collection of Conan Doyle memorabilia owned by the Portsmouth City Council, all of which focused on figures of both local and global interest. University support was strategically provided to enable collaboration with local partners, as well as primary research towards the production of commercial booklets (*Dickens and the Victorian City* [Tricorn, 2012]; *Tennyson 's Celebrity Circle* [Tricorn, 2011]) aimed at a general readership, and the creation of interactive websites: (www.dickens.port.ac.uk; www.tennysonscelebritycircle.port.ac.uk) to ensure sustainability. The success of such initiatives is evident in the range of local partners with whom strong relationships have been forged, and in CSL members' influential role in such initiatives as:

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- the Dickens bicentenary celebrations, at which researchers (*Pulham, Boyce, Pittard, Rousselot*) drew on their research to give press interviews, talks at local venues, introduce local film screenings in collaboration with the Portsmouth Film Society, stage special events, and used Dickens to raise awareness of social issues such as poverty and homelessness (e.g. a public talk on *A Christmas Carol*, before a screening of *Scrooge* (1951) at which we collected for Crisis at Christmas);
- the Portsmouth County Council's *Bookfest* festival and *Home of Great Writing programme* (e.g. *Pittard's* expertise in local heritage figures such as Charles Dickens and Arthur Conan Doyle was vital for the development of PCC's policy on cultural heritage and its literature strategy, and to the organisation of several public events to promote the cultural profile of the city);
- the promotion of tourism in Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight by regional bodies such as the West Wight Landscape Partnership, who used *Boyce* and *Finnerty's* research to develop a tourist leaflet and permanent display board on the Tennyson celebrity circle;
- the new policies adopted by the Julia Margaret Cameron Trust to promote and develop facilities at the Dimbola Lodge Museum, Isle of Wight, such as new exhibitions focusing on issues of Victorian and contemporary celebrity, based on *Boyce* and *Finnerty's* research on the Tennyson celebrity circle at Freshwater.

CSL is also affiliated with the Dickens Project (Univ. of California, Santa Cruz) and its members use their research to contribute annually to the organisation's public outreach programme, aimed at worldwide participants from the general public, ranging from teenagers to senior citizens.

Since its inception, CSL has encouraged its members to identify impact opportunities associated with their research, and impact strategies have been built into its Annual Research Evaluation programme, a mentoring scheme which allows individual researchers to discuss their research plans and future impact strategies. CSL members have also received wider institutional support to promote and facilitate events, engage the local press and create and monitor the Dickens and Tennyson websites. The University also provides opportunities for professional development relating to public engagement, such as media training. A long-term programme of special impact events, public lectures and film screenings accompanies CSL's schedule of research symposia and conferences (including an annual postgraduate conference). Its members give talks to societies, and at non-HE institutions, and *Boyce* sits on the steering group of the Julia Margaret Cameron Trust, providing advice and specialist knowledge.

c. Strategy and plans

A key strategic aim for this UoA is to build on the approaches outlined above and maximise the impact of its research activities. In the period 2014-2020, CSL's specific objectives are to:

- Prioritise internal support for research projects that involve key partners and include a range of impact activities;
- Further extend the impact arising from our existing research excellence and develop emerging impact from new collaborations and specialisms. For example, the 'Victorian Literary Heritage' project is to continue for a further two-year period and includes new research and impact ventures with the Julia Margaret Cameron Trust at Dimbola Lodge Museum, Isle of Wight, to celebrate the Cameron bicentenary. CSL members have also developed a major new project: 'Cultures of Commemoration' (*Rousselot, Berberich* and *Wolfreys*), which will feature a series of impact events, including readings and film screenings, based on high quality research on national identity, memory, loss, and the remembrance of the past, that will encompass the First World War commemorations in 2014 and beyond;
- Develop a range of new collaborations with local museums and charities to promote the co-design of research projects and improve access to a range of external funding, including Collaborative Doctoral Awards and other opportunities for PhD studentships;
- Contribute to the continuing disciplinary development of best practice in recognising and cultivating impact, liaising and collaborating with other UK HEIs;

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- Build on existing experience to enhance a robust framework for the monitoring, assessment and evidencing of research impact across the UoA and throughout the research lifecycle;
- Encourage further public engagement with our research in appropriate ways, including web-based and social media outlets and interactions, and hosting community and cultural events aligned with our research groups, with the aim of at least one significant event annually.

Achievement of these objectives will be supported by actions and processes that create an environment where impact-related activities are explicitly acknowledged, resourced and rewarded, including:

- Supporting staff in identifying the potential impact of their research, and identifying appropriate avenues to exploit it;
- Continuing to host regular events for potential beneficiaries that showcase our work;
- Increasing opportunities for staff mobility and exchanges with external stakeholders that maximise the impact of research within this UoA;
- Targeting our internal resources, where appropriate, at activities specifically designed to increase the impact of our work;
- Proactively gathering and maintaining a repository of evidence that will enable us to increase and refine the impact our work, and reviewing that evidence annually;
- Targeting funding sources for networking workshops, seminar series, exchanges, and engagement activities to maximize the impact of the research across the UoA;
- Focusing on follow-through activities (e.g. collaborations, working group memberships) stemming from our networking and outreach events to establish and document significant impacts across all of our research themes.

d. Relationship to case studies

Both case studies submitted reflect CSL's impact strategies: its commitment to facilitate team-led initiatives focused on issues of local/global significance, as well as impact developed from individuals' research. They exemplify the delivery of impact through support for primary research with impact potential and a variety of events to promote impact. ICS UOP29VICTORIAN demonstrates how the research of a team of scholars (*Pulham, Rousselot, Boyce and Finnerty*) on questions of celebrity and social marginality has been adapted and exploited to interpret and disseminate the region's cultural capital through public events, websites, and publications, prompting local stakeholders to re-evaluate existing knowledge, policy and commercial practice. ICS UOP29CRIME is based on the individual research of *Pittard* whose work on Victorian popular culture and representations of criminality has played a significant part in developing Portsmouth City Council's cultural and tourism strategies, informing the council's literature strategy and the *Home of Great Writing* programme, and strengthened the reputation of Portsmouth as a thriving literary city.