Institution: Sheffield Hallam University

Unit of Assessment: 29 English Language and Literature

a. Context
Beneficiaries. The main beneficiaries of our research have been national and international fiction and poetry readers, radio listeners in the UK and Eastern Uganda, secondary-school teachers and students, theatre companies and audiences, literary festival attendees, members of existing reading groups and new reading groups brought into being by research projects, participants in newly-created blogs about reading, librarians in public libraries, local community volunteers who acquired oral-history interviewing skills, and elderly and sometimes housebound interviewees in Sheffield and environs. Some research has also specifically engaged with public awareness of science and had impact on scientists, science-fiction writers and readers. Other research which raised awareness of extremism impacted on MPs, local government policy-makers and head-teachers (see Case Studies **b** and **c**). The reach of some impact has been mainly regional, although extended via social media (Brown**,** popular fiction), while other impacts have been national (Harris, extremism; L. Hopkins, renaissance theatre), or international in reach (Rogers, *The Testament of Jessie Lamb*).

Impact Types. English research has mainly resulted in impact which has enhanced the quality of cultural life and critical discussion locally, nationally and internationally (Earnshaw: work with the Bronte Society; Connolly, L. Hopkins, K. Wilkinson: public understanding of renaissance drama; Rogers: BBC National Short Story Award). Some impact has increased public awareness of important social issues (Harris: extremism in the UK; Jones: bio-medical research; Rogers: possibilities and ethics of contemporary science, gendered effects of Ugandan 'bride price' customs; Tarlo: environment). Other impact created new opportunities for social/cultural interaction which contributed to further research (Brown, C. Hopkins, co-production of a knowledge base in the Popular Fiction and the Reading Public project, research-support for oral history of reading and reading habits in Sheffield 1945-1965; Bell, digital fiction readers; Peplow, identity in reading groups).

Relation to Research. Work in all three groups produced impact based on current research themes (as outlined in **REF 5 Strategy**). **Literature** research, especially historicising work, led to impact through theatre talks, programme-notes, newspapers, A level and public events, reading groups, a blog-site, support for a community oral-history group, work with Sheffield City Libraries, and talks to literary societies, University of the 3rd Age, and schools. **Language** research on social interactions produced impact within reading groups (Peplow - see outputs 1 and 2) and there is also on-going work on how readers read the emerging narrative styles of digital fiction (Bell - see output 1). Both these projects worked with readers to gather data, but also provided feedback, leading to discussion and reflection on these leisure pursuits. **Creative writing** leading to publication/performance inherently reaches out beyond the academy. Our work has been widely reviewed in newspapers, on the web, and in blogs and responded to either as literary work and/or as a medium for debates about social issues, as detailed in case studies on *The Testament of Jessie Lamb* and *One Extreme to the Other*.

b. Approach to impact
Relationships with beneficiaries. Relationships already existed in Creative Writing, where public audiences for contemporary poetry, fiction, and drama form part of the intersection between creative writers' academic and professional lives. Thus writing research was able to reach beneficiaries through book sales, performances, websites, blogs and literature festivals, and through well-established experience of publicity via traditional and web-based media, often assisted by publishers. Public engagement leading to impact was less integral to Literature and Language in 2008. However, as Literature and Language impact projects developed, specific relationships with beneficiaries were consciously cultivated. Lessons were particularly drawn from expert speakers (usually responsible for public engagement in their cultural organisations) who contributed to the AHRC funded Practical Public Engagement Doctoral Training scheme (with Sheffield, 2010-12, open to staff and Postgraduate Researchers). Speakers contributed expertise on locating and building audiences, the need for a two-way exchange of benefits and the use of

social media. They also helped foster debates about whether beneficiaries valued coming into the university, or preferred already familiar venues. This input improved our ability to identify existing regional audiences and networks whose interests might match well with our impact projects in order to enable positive engagement (see examples below).

Types of Impact Relationship. Specific relationships were developed for impact work with individuals, cultural institutions and community groups. These relationships fell into different types, though many projects were based in more than a single such type:

- Existing events or venues gave opportunities to take research outside the University. Brown and C. Hopkins worked with Sheffield City Libraries, Off the Shelf literature festival (http://readingsheffield.wordpress.com/2013/06/29/off-the-shelf/); Jones worked with Arts in the Peaks, Cardiff University Medical School, Derby City Art Gallery, and the Millennium Gallery (http://www.chris-jones.org.uk/?p=159); Tarlo worked with the Holmfirth Arts Festival (http://www.hlmfirthartsfestival.co.uk/event-detail/event-12-101.html).
- Bringing together existing groups for new purposes. Brown and C. Hopkins worked with the *Reading Sheffield* community group http://readingsheffield.wordpress.com/) and Rogers worked with the Ugandan charity MIFUMI (http://mifumi.org/blog/?p=98).
- Creating new communities, physical and virtual, around research projects. Brown created the Reading 1900-1950 group (http://reading19001950.wordpress.com/about/). Peplow and Brown (in collaboration with Sheffield University) helped create the Sheffield Reading Groups Network (http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/english/booktalk).
- Relationships with groups (e.g. theatres) leading to impact on specific audiences (school teachers and students). L. Hopkins worked with West Yorkshire Playhouse (programme notes for *Tis Pity She's a Whore* and *King Lear,* both 2011) and Bolsover Castle ('The Cavendish Family and Drama' at English Heritage-sponsored event, 14/4/2012); Harris worked with GW Theatre Company and Preston FM Radio (http://www.canstream.co.uk/prestonfm/index.php?cat=DividedWeFall).

Impact support. After 2008 more formal mechanisms were developed to follow through impact and to collect quantitative and qualitative data about significance and reach. Thus staff were helped to develop tools (attending training where needed), such as questionnaires, surveys, websites, blogs and tweets to track impact. We adapted elements of the existing research-leave allocation system, so that the English Research Committee adopted formal processes for identifying research with impact potential and for allocating funding and providing advice and leadership in a timely manner. For example, agility of response was shown after a public donation in 2008 to the University Library of a collection of early editions of best-selling fiction from 1900-1950. C. Hopkins took over the leadership and development of the 'Readerships and Literary Cultures 1900-1950' Special Collection, in collaboration with a senior member of Library staff: Head of Information Resources. This work was then supported by two 18 month fixed-term appointments (Grover 0.25 fte; 2010-12; Brown, 1 fte, 2012-14) solely to enhance research, public engagement and subsequent impact arising from this project. Funding for this and other impact work covered staff travel, external venues and catering, transport for beneficiaries where needed (e.g. for elderly, housebound and carers), IT training (e.g. effective use of social media), collection of testimony and also remission and research leave (e.g. Harris' leave in 2011 to develop an interactive web-version of *One Extreme to Another* - see http://gwextreme.com/index.html). Institutional resources were drawn on to publicise events and to engage the public, including the SHU Media Team (leading to newspaper and radio publicity, on Radio Sheffield and the *Yorkshire Post*). The SHU Events Team and the Director of Communications organised and contributed to the funding of public events, and Sheffield City Libraries, Off the Shelf and Sheffield bookshops publicised these and helped attracted participants and beneficiaries (e.g. for Impact case study **a**).

c. Strategy and plans

Since 2008, the English Research Committee (ERC) has begun to embed strategy and plans for impact by integrating it into research infrastructure on a par with other activities. Thus the ERC has identified research with impact potential, annually allocating funding to activities with potential significance and reach. New staff development has also been piloted with an impact workshop in 2011 led by Professor Judy Simons where she reported on conclusions drawn from the HEFCE Impact Pilot study, and a university-wide event in 2012 where impact was discussed with examples

of case studies from a range of disciplines. For 2014-19 we have eight aims:

1. to ensure that future impact activity is embedded in our main research themes in Creative Writing, Language and Literature
2. to embed further processes for prioritising, funding and developing public engagement and impact activities and for capturing impact data
3. to put in place a staff development programme to broaden and deepen expertise, including workshops on the experience of developing impact by staff involved in the REF 2014 case studies in both the English and History UoAs
4. to hold annual workshops run by external speakers from inside and outside the University drawing on case studies of successful impact in the Humanities
5. to fund training in use of social media, since recent experience suggests facility with these tools should be included in our repertoire of skills (Bell, pilot study for larger digital fiction project, Brown, http://reading19001950.wordpress.com/).
6. to develop and resource five main impact projects from 2014, from which to select case studies for a future REF assessment
7. to include impact achievement, skills and potential in staffing strategy, with potential and experience playing a greater part in appraisal and progression, and in person specifications for new posts (as was already the case for several ECRs who have engaged with impact - Brown, Peplow, K. Wilkinson)
8. particularly to foster a cluster of projects around the experiences of readers and reading groups; these will include Bell's AHRC Reading Digital Fiction project (January 2014-June 2016, £250,000) with its focus on the experiences of digital fiction readers.

d. Relationship to case studies

The three case studies exemplify our overall approach to achieving impact in four key ways:

1) each identifies research which is especially open to interaction with a wider public or has this as a core aim

2) each has mutual benefits for the group's research and for specific communities, often initially local or regional, though with potential for national or international extension.

3) each shows that impact is best supported by a variety of means including events in the university and public spaces (libraries, schools, theatres, literary festivals), through traditional media and through virtual means such as websites and blogs

4) each shows that building and sustaining enduring relationships with partners and beneficiaries is key to impact.

Our experience of the three case studies has informed our future approach to impact. The two Creative Writing case studies were rooted in existing relationships between academia and a wider public, partly because of the expertise of publishers and partly through creative writers' own expertise in maintaining contact with their audiences. Nevertheless, experience needed to be gained in recording and articulating links between this research and impact, and in evaluating reach and significance. The Popular Fiction case study, though well-suited in principle to producing impact, required us to think in more novel ways about how to develop literary research as an impactful activity since we had to build up links between the research and the community from relatively limited and informal foundations. However, we were able from the beginning to evaluate the significance and reach of this impact through tracking participation, questionnaires and responses to newsletters, emails and blogs. In each case we had to learn some new techniques and practices (e.g. blogging, development of a scholarly, but publically accessible discourse). It is important that key lessons are fed back to the wider English group, so that there is awareness of how we can build up impact from a project's commencement, and how we can enhance existing relationships to increase the reach and significance of our impact.