

Institution: University of Dundee
Unit of Assessment: 29 English Language and Literature
Title of case study: Poetry Beyond Text
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This impact arises from a series of funded interdisciplinary projects, studying hybrid poetic-visual art works. The research identified psychological processes in the reception of such works and studied the creative and collaborative processes involved in their making. The impact was primarily on cultural life, as defined in the Panel D criteria and this included three main areas: (1) the public understanding of art forms such as digital poetry, artists' books and concrete poetry; (2) the practice and careers of commissioned artists and writers; (3) the policy and public profile of partner non-HE institutions, notably the Scottish Poetry Library.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>This interdisciplinary research used methods from literary criticism, aesthetics, experimental psychology, fine art and creative practice to study readers' responses to hybrid poetic-visual art works, including digital poetry, concrete and visual poetry, artists' books, text film and poetry combined with photography.</p> <p>Key research questions: (1) When art works combine textual and visual elements, how do the modes of attention specific to reading text and viewing images interact and modify each other? (2) What factors determine whether the combination of textual and visual elements in such works enriches or limits their meaning and aesthetic value? (3) How are evaluative and interpretive responses to such works affected by the development of enhanced reflective awareness about the processes involved? (4) How can critical and psychological models of perception and aesthetic experience inform and be informed by the creation of new works of art?</p> <p>The empirical research demonstrated through psychological testing those aspects of such works that support or inhibit productive aesthetic experiences for readers. This research was carried out by Roberts (Professor, English, Dundee), Stabler (Lecturer, English, Dundee, left 2004), Fischer (Professor, Psychology, Dundee, left 2011) and Otty (Postdoctoral Researcher, Dundee) during 2002-3 and 2010, and by Schaffner (Lecturer, Comparative Literature, Kent) Knowles (Postdoctoral Researcher, Comparative Literature, Kent), Weger (Lecturer, Kent) and Roberts during 2009-10.</p> <p>The research into digital poetry revealed connections between experimental psychology and digital creative practice, in the form of striking similarities in technology, procedure and focus of interest, combined with disparities in the underlying epistemological assumptions. This research, carried out by Roberts, Otty, Schaffner and Fischer, had a significant impact on the creative practice of major digital artists and poets, notably John Cayley and Simon Biggs: Cayley's work <i>The Reader's Project</i> was substantially influenced by his involvement in <i>Poetry Beyond Text</i>, as noted in section 4 and supporting letter [corroborating evidence 5.6] while Biggs developed the highly innovative work <i>Tower</i> as a commissioned collaboration (as described in section 4).</p> <p>The practice-based research component of the main project (2009-11) was disseminated in the form of a series of exhibitions, which demonstrated the specific potentialities of certain forms of mixed media work, in relation to psychological and aesthetic modes of understanding. This research was carried out 2009-11 by Roberts, Modeen (Senior Lecturer, Fine Art, Dundee), Otty and Fischer, but also involved significant co-production of research with stakeholders - 44 commissioned artists and poets. This research, recorded both in the online gallery and in the published catalogue, had a significant impact on the career of participating artists and poets, and on the practice, policy and profile of partner institutions (notably the Scottish Poetry Library). A further practice-based element of the project was inspired by debates about 'visual thinking', and involved art students being asked to respond in purely visual / material (non-verbal) form to text</p>

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poems. The resulting art works (in a range of media) were then presented to poets, who were asked (without knowledge of the original poems) to respond in poetic form. This sequence of 'translations' between verbal and visual media was repeated a number of times, with significant impact on the creative practice and careers of those involved.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. Andrew Michael Roberts, Jane Stabler, Martin Fischer and Lisa Otty, 'Space And Pattern In Linear And Postlinear Poetry: Empirical And Theoretical Approaches', *European Journal of English Studies* (2013). DOI: 10.1080/13825577.2012.754967
2. Kim Knowles, Anna Katharina Schaffner, Ulrich Weger, Andrew M. Roberts, 'Reading Space in Visual Poetry: New Cognitive Perspectives', *Writing Technologies* (2012). http://www.ntu.ac.uk/writing_technologies/current_journal/index.html
3. Andrew Michael Roberts, Lisa Otty, Martin Fischer and Anna Katharina Schaffner, 'Creative Practice and Experimental Method in Electronic Literature and Human Experimental Psychology', accepted for publication in *dichtung-digital*, special issue on Electronic Literature Communities, Part II (Summer 2012). <http://www.dichtung-digital.de/>
4. Mary Modeen, with contributions by Andrew Michael Roberts, Martin Fischer, Lisa Otty, Anna Katharina Schaffner, Ulrich Weger and Kim Knowles, *Poetry Beyond Text: Vision, Text and Cognition*: Exhibition Catalogue (University of Dundee, 2011). Can be supplied by HEI on request. <http://www.poetrybeyondtext.org/index.html>
5. <http://www.poetrybeyondtext.org/> (includes research results, resources for readers, online gallery)

The research was AHRC-funded, following peer-review, within a highly competitive programme (the Beyond Text programme). Items 1, 2 and 3 have been accepted by peer-reviewed journals. Items 1 and 3 are being submitted as REF outputs.

Research Grants funding this research

- Roberts PI (sole investigator): *Poetry Beyond Text / Scottish Poetry Library: 'Archive of Reading'* (AHRC 'Beyond Text' Follow-On Grant); Feb 2011 – August 2011: £23,056.
Roberts PI, with Martin Fischer (Psychology, Dundee), Mary Modeen (Fine Art, Dundee), Anna Katharina Schaffner (Comparative Literature, Kent), Ulrich Weger (Psychology, Kent): *Poetry Beyond Text: Vision, Text and Cognition* (AHRC 'Beyond Text' Large Grant); March 2009 – February 2011; £472,617.
<http://projects.beyondtext.ac.uk/poetrybeyondtext/index.php>
- Roberts PI, with Jane Stabler (English, Dundee), Martin Fischer (Psychology, Dundee); *The Effects of Form and Technique on Cognition, Aesthetic Response and Evaluation in Reading Poetry* (AHRB Innovations Award); January 2002 – April 2003: £50,715.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The 'Archive of Reading' is an online resource located at the Scottish Poetry Library. It was developed through the AHRC follow-on grant dedicated to impact generation, which also funded workshops with local council libraries in Scotland. These impact activities were based on research items 1 and 2 above. [Refs 3.1 and 3.2] These report on experiments combining psychological testing methods (eye-tracking and interviews) with theoretical investigation to study the cognitive, emotive and aesthetic effects of visual-poetic works. Integrating the empirical methods of human experimental psychology with the critical and evaluative methods of the humanities, the research showed how cognitive processes associated with text-reading and image-viewing interacted in productive or inhibiting ways. Before dissemination in the form of the published articles, the results were shared with the volunteer participants (19 in Dundee; 14 in Kent), contributing to their personal development. [Ref. 5.1] The 'Archive of Reading', located in the SPL, enables visitors to

watch on screen visual representations of the reading process, accompanied by analysis of research results. Workshops were held at the SPL (24.5.11), at DG Arts in Dumfries (3.6.11) and in Kilmarnock as part of the Ayrshire Council Imprint Festival (10.11.11) with creative writers, artists, teachers and members of the general public, drawing on the research and its visual presentation in the Archive itself. Written feedback includes: 'it's inspired me to take this idea into the classroom' (primary-school teacher); 'I might do the task [a cut-up exercise based on one of the project experiments] with my own students' (high-school teacher); 'I will use these techniques to write concrete poems' and 'I'm going to pursue this creatively through my work' (artist). **[Ref. 5.9]**

The Readers' Project is an innovative on-going digital poetic art-work by the digital language artist John Cayley **[Ref. 5.2]**. It was informed by the research leading to publication Reference 3.3. This research involved an investigation into convergences between the procedures of experimental psychology and the innovations of digital poets and artists, carried out by a psychologist (Fischer), literary scholars (Roberts, Schaffner and Otty) and digital artists and poets (John Cayley and Simon Biggs). The opening advisers' workshop of the project (May 2009) led to Cayley responding to results of pilot eye-tracking experiments. Cayley describes this work as 'strongly and productively influenced by *Poetry Beyond Text*' (supporting letter), adding that as a result '*The Readers Project* ... has now gained significant attention from the appropriate research community'. Building on this co-production of research with creative practitioners, a small grant from the University of Dundee Humanities Research Fund was used to initiate a collaboration between digital media artist Simon Biggs and Computer Programmer Mark Shovman to create *Tower*, an immersive 3D textual environment combining visualisation, speech recognition and predictive text algorithms, using the HIVE (Human Interactive Virtual Environment) housed in the University of Abertay, Dundee, and unveiled at the project's concluding conference. **[Ref. 5.3]**

Impact in the form of creative interventions in the careers and creative practice of poets and visual artists was another aspect of the project. The practice-based research recorded in References 5.2, 5.3 and 5.5 involved the commissioning of collaborative art works by 44 poets and artists (in diverse media). This process advanced creativity by pairing together poets, artists, sculptors and printmakers, with an invitation to engage specifically with the aesthetic, technical and artistic issues arising from the interaction of visual and poetic forms. The experience of collaboration has had substantial continuing effects on individual creative careers, and on the specific media and disciplines concerned. Those involved include well-established and distinguished poets (such as John Burnside, Robin Robertson, Jim Carruth, Thomas A. Clark and Deryn Rees-Jones) and artists (such as Will Mclean, David Bellingham), as well as younger and emerging artists and poets, and some art students, whose careers and profiles have been enhanced through the opportunity to exhibit and to engage in a collective process of creative research. The range was international, including John Cayley, based at Brown University, and Jim Andrews, a Canadian media artist. Discussions of the process of collaborative creation have included public events: Helen Douglas with Valerie Gillies (at the opening of the Dundee exhibition); Deryn Rees-Jones with Marion Smith; Jim Carruth with Murray Robertson and Michael Waight (at the Scottish Poetry Library). **[Ref. 5.4]** These events have shown how collaboration has prompted new insight into formal and thematic aspects of creative practice (Rees-Jones comments that the work 'extended my existing poetic compositions into mixed media form'). **[Ref. 5.7]** The benefits for the commissioned artist and writers also included new contacts and additional opportunities to engage the public. The exhibitions attracted good numbers for the venues: 412 at the Visual Research Centre in Dundee; c. 500 at the Scottish Poetry Library (14 May – 15 July 2011); 1,389 at the Moray Arts Centre (9 Aug – 30 Sep 2011), c. 3000 at the Royal Scottish Academy (12 Nov – 18 Dec 2011). The role of these exhibitions in enhancing cultural life is shown in visitor feedback. **[Ref. 5.9]** The research contributed substantially to the connections, profile, subject interest areas and events programmes of the Scottish Poetry Library, as indicated in supporting letters. **[Refs 5.6, 5.7 and 5.8]**

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5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. <http://tonguefire.wordpress.com/2011/05/24/poetry-beyond-text/> (discussion by participating poet)
2. <http://thereadersproject.org/index.php?p=installation/pbt/pbtcaption.html> (website of participating digital poet, John Cayley)
3. <http://www.littlepig.org.uk/tower/index.htm> (website of participating digital media artist, Simon Biggs)
4. <http://www.blipfoto.com/view.php?id=1201816> (link to appreciation of project event by Mike Russell, Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, 7 June 2011)
5. http://www.craftscotland.org/craft-news/news-article.html?ceci-nest-pas-un-poem---rachels-blog&document_id=242 (review of reading / discussion events, by a member of CraftScotland)
6. Letter from: Scottish Poetry Library, John Cayley,
7. Letter from: Scottish Poetry Library, Deryn Rees-Jones.
8. Letter from: Scottish Poetry Library, Julie Johnstone
9. Records of public responses / feedback for workshops and exhibitions.