

Institution: University of Reading

Unit of Assessment: 34B Art & Design: History, Theory & Practice (TYPOGRAPHY & GRAPHIC COMMUNICATION)

a. Overview

The Department of Typography & Graphic Communication at the University of Reading has an international reputation for research in the theory, history and practice of 'design for reading'. It focuses on the areas of information design, book and document design and typeface design. Since the late 1960s, it has developed a new university discipline that blends an understanding of language, the craft tradition of printing and newer digital technologies, perception, aesthetics, project management, social and economic history, education and the graphic arts. The award of the Queen's Anniversary Prize in 2011 for 'A world-leading centre of typographic teaching and research' acknowledged the excellence of research described as 'Design research and knowledge transfer with everyday relevance' and 'Research that defines new histories and understanding'.

The Department houses design collections and archives of international importance, for example, the Otto and Marie Neurath Isotype Collection, the Maurice Rickards Collection of Ephemera and the Non-Latin Type Collection. These underpin staff research and contribute to a stimulating environment for graduate students, many of whom are working with the collections in their research. As a Department with 14 research-active staff (of whom 9 are full-time) external collaboration, partnership and engagement are essential to the vitality of its research environment. This is seen in particular through the work of two research centres: the Centre for Information Design Research [CIDR], which works with government and the health sector, and the Centre for Ephemera Studies [CES], which collaborates with museums, libraries and galleries. Research funded by research councils, charities, learned bodies, government and industry is undertaken within these two research centres as well as by individuals and by project teams. Some of this research is undertaken through practice, though most results in papers in refereed journals and monographs, and curated exhibitions. The outcomes of the Department's research are also made available through professional journals, the web and digital media, television and radio, and public exhibitions.

The Department of Typography & Graphic Communication is part of the School of Arts and Communication Design, along with Art, and Film, Theatre & Television. This is a 'federal' school, where each Department manages resource and strategy for research in line with School and University objectives and plans.

b. Research strategy

The Department's research strategy derives from its commitment to maintaining and developing intellectual leadership in design for reading. Its continuing strategic objectives, and those that have determined the REF submission are to:

- **use archives and collections to support innovative research projects**

During this REF period a key priority has been to increase the use of collections and archives in staff and postgraduate research and to raise awareness of them outside academia. Funding from AHRC resulted in two completed major projects of this kind. 'Designing information for everyday life, 1815–1914' project (2006–10) [Stiff (PI) with Esbester and Dobrascyck (PDs)] aimed to reveal and explain what can be learned from Victorian 'information design' – an informed but little known, ancestor of today's graphic design (see www.designinginformati.org.uk). Research on graphic explanation and visualisation of complex statistical information was central to the 'Isotype revisited' project (2007–11) [Kindel (PI) and Walker (Co-I)], which was based on Reading's Otto and Marie Neurath Isotype collection (see www.isotyperevisited.org). The Non-Latin Type Collection is fundamental to the research-informed work of Ross and Leonidas to develop new typefaces.

• develop and promote research through working with research users, in particular through the Department's research centres

The Centre for Information Design Research (CIDR), under the directorship of Black, is establishing cross-disciplinary research in the areas of the public communication of health and science issues, including research in information design in new media, as well as paper documents. This Centre grew from the Simplification Centre (set up as one of the University's strategic research priorities), which aimed to improve the clarity of information about issues such as health, pensions, the law, tax, and benefits). Through its programme of research-led benchmarking and workshops, the Simplification Centre has helped government (HMRC, the Department of Work and Pensions [DWP], the Welsh Assembly) and financial services (AXA and Aegon insurance) to improve their document design. The Maurice Rickards Collection of Ephemera and the Centre for Ephemera Studies provided the venue for a innovative conference and accompanying exhibition in 2012 on Black Ephemera which brought together researchers from the Centre, the V&A, British Museum and the University's 'Minority identities: rights and representations' research network. Through study days in collaboration with the V&A and University of London IES Rare Books School the Department's research in ephemera is effectively disseminated to a professional curatorial and conservation audience and a History of the Book research audience. The Department is committed to encouraging public engagement with our research through, for example, the CIDR user panel, and its user-centred approach to much of its design research, in which consultation and discussion with different kinds of information user (such as children, elderly people, those for whom English is not their first language) is an essential element. The Department has also collaborated enthusiastically with Faculty of Arts and Humanities' public engagement initiatives such as the EU-funded Researchers' Night: Language Text and Power event in 2011.

• support collaboration with research partners internationally and nationally

Research in typeface design, particularly in non-Latin scripts, has found wide application through consultancy and other projects during the REF period. Resources that currently enable computer-based texts for many communities have largely been developed with input from Leonidas, Ross and de Baerdemaeker (Leverhulme Research Fellow 2011-13), including Arabic newspapers in the Gulf, scholarly Greek in universities worldwide, and Indian scripts on mobile devices. De Baerdemaeker's work on Mongolian typeface design (mongoliantype.com) aims to assist the development of digital and printed resources in the Mongolian language through the provision of culturally informed type design. Ross, as a result of her involvement in an AHRC-funded scoping visit, is pursuing potential collaboration between the Department, the British Library and the National Library, Kolkata where research organisations with interests in Bengali language, history and culture will work on a project 'Early Bengali Books on-line: 1778–1914'. The Department continues to work with universities in Brazil, for example Universidade Federal de Pernambuco through a memorandum of agreement that supports staff and student exchanges. The appointment of Lund has provided opportunities for closer engagement with European design and technology networks (Lund has a highly successful track record in Norway and established the interdisciplinary Norwegian Color Research Laboratory).

• encourage and support staff in funding and promoting high quality research

Staff are encouraged to apply for small and large grants, responding to opportunities from, for example, research councils and charities, and also industry and public sector organisations for more immediate and responsive funding. This approach has resulted in an agile peer review system in the Department, where experienced colleagues provide informal review as part of proposal development. Informal peer reviews of work for publication have always been undertaken in Typography, particularly as many projects are undertaken in teams, where papers and monographs are reviewed internally as a matter of course. Since 2009 a more formal peer review has been in place and research outputs are read by two members of staff who advise on publication routes, and how improvements might be made. Most of the Department's externally-funded research projects have a web site that is regularly updated. Many members of staff and research students blog internally and externally, and tweet about their research and that of their colleagues. This digital interaction contributes to a research 'buzz' and provides opportunity to link with related research in other institutions, and with research users.

- **expand and enhance postgraduate provision**

The Department has sought collaboration with external organisations to extend both funding and opportunities for graduate students. It has built on its relationships with museums and libraries to attract funding for collaborative doctoral awards: 'International cross-currents in typeface design' (with the Musée de l'imprimerie, Lyon) and 'Typeface designs of Eric Gill' (with St Bride Library, London). Presentation of the departmental 'graduate school' at subject association conferences, such as those of Association Typographique Internationale, where alumni play a significant ambassadorial role, is an important part of our recruitment strategy. Many of our PhD students are working part-time in other HEIs, or in the design and creative industries, and the Department has benefited from the relationships such students bring, such as through postgraduate bursary funding (e.g. from Monotype). Walker initiated and led the development of the recently-funded AHRC Block Grant 2 'Design Star' DTC. This will enable us to enrich postgraduate provision, in particular through collaboration with industrial, cultural and public service providers, and will further enhance our commitment to part-time PhD study.

- **be involved in the editing and designing of publications to extend the reach of 'design for reading'**

Working within a small research field can restrict opportunities for publishing, especially when many journals do not encourage large numbers of illustrations, especially those in colour. Many members of staff design their own research outputs, within the production constraints imposed by their publishers. This exemplifies our approach to collegiate, high-quality, editorial typography and graphic communication, including particular attention to the effective use and reproduction of illustration. In the REF period Burke, Kindel, Banham, Luna, Leonidas, and Walker have undertaken editorial and design work in support of the Department's research.

c. People, including:

i. Staffing strategy and staff development

The REF period has seen a considerable amount of academic staff movement through retirement [Andrews]; death [Stiff]; resignation [Gillieson and Waller], and end of fixed-term appointment [Delin]. New appointments have been made through strategic investment, and replacement posts. A Professor in User-Centred Design [Black] was appointed to bridge research and practice to address real-world communication needs in areas such as health promotion and care, digital inclusion, independent living for the elderly and climate change. Black is supported by a Research Assistant. The full-time appointment of a Reader in Information Design [Lund] from August 2012 and the appointment of Blacksell to a full-time post (from 2011) demonstrate commitment to the areas of information design and to book design practice and history respectively. Lund brings considerable administrative as well as research experience, and Blacksell's work makes connections with the book as a mode of artists' practice. Burke, who worked on the Isotype Revisited project, has been retained as a 0.2fte Research Fellow, and he continues to work on research with material from the Otto and Marie Neurath Isotype Collection. To increase time available for research by research-active colleagues, a part-time Teaching Fellow has been appointed, and sessional teaching-only staff continue to contribute to time-intensive studio teaching.

The Department is committed to the local Research Concordat for research staff and each member of research staff has an academic mentor. The University monitors the implementation of the Concordat through the annual Research Plan for Research Staff submitted by Department Director of Research and Department Research Committee, on which post-docs are represented. The Department takes career development of its post-doctoral researchers seriously, according to their individual needs. In this REF period Dobrascyk, Esbester, Eve, Stanbridge and de Baerdemaeker undertook teaching in the Department: undergraduate history of graphic communication Part 1 seminars [Dobrascyk, Esbester]; MA seminars [Eve, Stanbridge and de Baerdemaeker], as well as contributing to research seminars; exhibition curation and design arising from the research projects they worked on; editing and proof-reading of material for publication; and contributions to Typography's project web sites and blogs.

Staff produce annual research plans in which they provide information about their intended research activities for the year ahead, and indications of support they may need, for example, additional time to produce a research grant application. The plans also provide opportunity to reflect on the previous year's plan and what has been achieved. The plans feed into the Departmental Research Plan, produced by the Department Director of Research, and also into individual Staff Development Reviews. At these reviews research objectives, training needs and any problems are discussed. Staff are encouraged to attend relevant workshops run by the Centre for Staff Training and Development within the University. For members of the Department these have included sessions on being a PI and on internationalization with a focus on research.

Within the Department, individual staff research is supported through transfers of funds to each member of staff's Staff Development Account, and the provision of Departmental research terms (1 in 9). During the REF period further internal resource from the Research Endowment Trust Fund was available through competition at Faculty level to support additional time to complete a research output, or to put together a funding application. Beneficiaries included Banham, Dyson, Kindel and Luna. Additional Department support (through light terms) is provided strategically to ensure that research-related deadlines are met, or to enable staff to attend conferences or research visits overseas – such cases are made via the Departmental Research Committee. Early career researchers are given particular support. In the REF period Blacksell has had a lighter teaching load and additional time to complete her PhD [submitted 2012]. The University's Undergraduate Research Opportunities Programme has provided funding to allow staff to pilot research approaches with support of and training for undergraduate students, and Dyson's, Leonidas's and Black's work has benefitted from this. All staff benefit from internal support in writing research grant applications through dissemination of information about funding sources and critical peer review of drafts of applications within the Department and from the relevant Research & Enterprise Development Manager.

A successful and stimulating environment has helped to enhance promotion to senior posts in the REF period [Banham, Stiff, Ross] and has contributed to the employability of Dobrascyk, Esbester and Minns, who worked as PDRAs on funded projects, and who have since moved on to academic and academic-support posts.

In line with an initiative developed by the University Museums, Archives and Collections Service, Typography welcomes and supports volunteers. Much of the day-to-day running of the Centre for Ephemera Studies is undertaken by a team of volunteers who work closely with members of academic staff in cataloguing, contributing to symposia and study days and writing papers. For all our funded projects we aim to include external members on their Advisory Boards, who donate their time and often support the Department in other ways, such as providing PhD students with privileged access to museum and library collections.

ii. Research students

The Department is committed to playing its part in developing research leaders of the future. Its relatively small size leads to a supportive and collegiate research environment. PhD students are considered to be 'graduate researchers' and are encouraged to produce conference papers, write journal articles, often with a supervisor as a co-author; to join subject associations; to organize seminars and conferences, and to contribute to the informal publishing and engagement activities within the Department. Research briefings by staff keep students up to date with their work, and students are encouraged to draw on the range of support available beyond their supervisors. Those intent on an academic career have been offered opportunities for undergraduate and PGT teaching and to chair seminars when the student's interest is theoretical or historical, or assist with teaching on practical projects when the student has design practice experience. Graduate students are encouraged to extend their knowledge and understanding by attending short courses run, for example, by the Centre for Ephemera Studies, where if relevant to their PhD, they benefit from access to printing workshop facilities and expertise in printing processes.

A research student representative contributes to the Department's Research Committee and Research Student Committee. All research students contribute to postgraduate open days and are

Environment template (REF5)

a key component of our recruitment activity. A cohort of around 30 MA students across a suite of four programmes contributes to a lively and vibrant postgraduate community that provides potential candidates for PhDs and highlights our three research strands: information design, design history and type design.

Giving more profile to collections and archives as a fruitful source for PhD research has been developed over the REF period, along with pursuit of CDA funding, in particular with partners who offer opportunity for curation and public dissemination of research as part of the project. The Non-Latin Type Collection has recently been promoted through various international exhibitions (Reykjavik 2011 and Hong Kong 2012) with input from graduate students who benefit from promoting aspects of their PhD work, as well as learning curatorial and exhibition design skills through working with members of staff.

Typography benefits from the University-wide Graduate School which, following investment and development, provides support and training for research students and their supervisors, oversees competitions for PhD funding and provides desk space and social activities. The Graduate School implements University Code of Practice on Research Students, including provision of training across the four aspects of the Researcher Development Framework (RDF), combining face-to-face delivery of its researcher development programme with on-line delivery of key transferable skills, such as entrepreneurship and research methods. Alongside the generic research training provided by the Graduate School (to which Department staff contribute), Typography's doctoral researchers receive subject-specific training from four sources: individual instruction from their supervisors; wider-ranging discussions from their research advisory groups (comprising their supervisor and at least one other member of staff in Typography); regular, more informal meetings of research students, led by Dyson, which discuss a particular method used by one or more of the group; research seminars which include annual presentations from each research student and focused discussion of specific research methods topics open to all research students. Topics include use of collections and archival material, interview techniques, systematic analyses of graphic material, empirical methods including gathering and analyzing qualitative and quantitative data.

On registration each doctoral student completes a 'Learning Needs Analysis' template document (that identifies the skills and attributes set out in the Researcher Development Framework) and that forms the basis of discussion between the student and their supervisors who advise students on appropriate training and its mode of delivery at all stages throughout the PhD. Students are expected to undertake around 10 sessions of research and skills training across the three years of a full-time PhD.

Training in PhD supervision is standard in the induction and training of new academic staff. Where new academic staff have not previously supervised research students they attend relevant training offered by the Centre for Staff Training and Development, including practical activities such as mock vivas and sessions dealing with common doctoral supervision problems. Within the Department, those who have not supervised before are given an induction by the Director of PG Studies, take on second supervisor roles as part of their training, and are included in a student's research advisory group.

d. Income, infrastructure and facilities

In the REF period the Department has extended its range of research funders and has received research grants amounting to over £1.2m from AHRC and the Leverhulme Trust, as well as sponsors from industry and the public sector, including Monotype Imaging Ltd, AXA UK, the Welsh Assembly, the National Offender Management Service, HMRC and DWP. The success of these public-sector projects were further supported by University RETF funding to limited-term posts for Delin and Evans. In the REF period research students were funded as follows: AHRC – 9; University of Reading – 5; CAPES/CnPQ (Brazil) – 3; Felix Scholarship – 1; Ministry of National Education, Turkey – 1; self-funded – 5.

The appointment of a Curator [Bilbey, 0.5fte] funded by the Department has increased the accessibility of Typography's archives and collections. This, combined with extensive refurbishment, means that a reading room is now available for researchers. The Department is

benefitting from a £10k University project to provide online access to collection catalogues. Beyond the Department, the University has outstanding archives and collections relevant to Typography, including the MLA-designated archives of British publishers and printers and the Samuel Beckett collection. Further material, such as the Printing Collection, the 1851 Great Exhibition collection and the archives of the Society of Typographic Designers support Typography's research. The Department benefits further from a generous Library allocation apportioned through the Faculty to fund key journals and books, and this is supplemented within Typography, which allocates resource to providing material relevant to staff and postgraduate research.

The University's estates strategy anticipates that the Department will move to specially refurbished accommodation. When this happens, the Department will be able to bring out of store its collection of working historic printing presses, which is acknowledged by the National Printing Heritage Trust to be of international importance. Within the existing building, re-organisation of space in the Department has created a dedicated space for postgraduate research students, and offices for post-graduate researchers on funded projects.

The location of the University's Design and Print Services within the Department provides support in the form of photography of material for illustration in publications, through digital enhancement of images and through design and production advice, for example, on catalogues to support research-related exhibitions.

e. Collaboration or contribution to the discipline or research base

The Department strives to encourage vibrant and stimulating inter-disciplinary work, and its research contributes to scholarship and has day-to-day application and relevance, indicated here under Departmental research strategy objectives:

- **use archives and collections to support innovative research projects**

Curation and exhibition design has been an important aspect of research in the REF period. Notable and well-received examples are: 'Designing information before designers' at St Bride Library in London, 2009/10 [Stiff]; 'Isotype: international picture language' at the Victoria & Albert Museum in 2010/11 [Burke, Kindel, Walker], 'Between writing & type: the stencil letter', Catapult, Antwerp, April–June 2012 [Kindel]. In each case this work has shown different ways of approaching design research through consideration of archival material. Each exhibition was accompanied by an illustrated catalogue.

- **develop and promote research through working with research users, in particular through the Department's research centres**

Black has been involved in successful cross-disciplinary projects where CIDR's involvement has been to ensure user focus in information presentation to end users. One project (JISC-funded), led by Systems Engineering, is concerned with the development of digital skills across the Institution; a second (funded by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation), in collaboration with the Museum of English Rural Life, is concerned with presenting information about museum exhibits on hand-held devices to be used within or outside the museum. Black is also collaborating with Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust on a number of information design projects including the development of information tools used in the assessment and care of people with dementia on admission to hospital and the development of a post-diagnosis 'information prescription' pack to be given to all patients diagnosed with dementia. CIDR continues to raise the value of information design research in public service through membership of the All Party Parliamentary Design and Innovation Group [Black, Walker]. The Centre for Ephemera Studies has collaborated with institutions, including Library of Congress, the British Library and the Bodleian Library to produce 'A thesaurus of graphic terms for ephemera' which will provide a working tool for those cataloguing ephemera.

- **support collaboration with research partners internationally and nationally**

Internationally, Dyson is involved in a research network looking at cross-language study of designing legible characters with the aim of identifying the underlying principles or structures that optimize the legibility of characters across languages, starting with English, then Chinese and Arabic. Network members are Prof Ching Suen (Director, CENPARMI – Centre for Pattern

Environment template (REF5)

Recognition and Machine Intelligence) Concordia University, Canada; Nathalie Dumont, Design & Computer Arts, Concordia University, Canada; Dr Yu-Chi Tai, Vision Performance Institute, Pacific University, U.S.A. Dyson also has a collaboration with School of Design, Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, which involves joint research and publication. Kindel has an ongoing collaboration with Fred Smeijers, Professor of Digital Typography, Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst, Leipzig; Ross's and Leonidas's research-led practice in typeface design has developed through collaborations with industry partners such as Microsoft and Adobe. The Department is an Associate partner with the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London providing a high-profile location in central London for the public dissemination of research as well as a new context to establish cross-disciplinary research networks and collaborations.

The AHRC-funded LUCID (Learning, Understanding and Communicating about Information Design) network [Walker, Dyson] involved colleagues from the universities of Surrey, Lancaster and Cardiff, the Royal College of Art, University of the Arts and several universities in Brazil. Particularly successful were a series of postgraduate workshops, and from these the Department benefited from a PhD student from Brazil, and Black's invitation to be Co-I on a collaborative NERC-funded project, PURE, with a consortium of meteorology and climate science departments at Universities of Birkbeck, Durham, Edinburgh, Oxford, NERC British Geological Survey, Imperial College and UCL.

Staff contribute to the broader discipline through membership of boards and committees including Association Typographique Internationale (ATypI) [Leonidas, Ross], the Information Design Association [Walker, Co-Chair], the Ephemera Society [Twyman, Banham]; the Printing Historical Society, the National Printing Heritage Trust [Twyman], and Chair of the Friends of St Bride Library [Banham, Chair], member of the AHRC Peer Review College [Kindel] and 2014 REF panel member for UoA34 [Walker]. Banham and Twyman are invited members of the committee set up to oversee the future of the St Bride Library, and the Arts Council England specialist subject network on the poster, initiated by the V&A.

Members of the Department have undertaken external examining of PhDs, including at the Royal College of Art, University of Hertfordshire, University of Arts London, Anglia Ruskin, Portsmouth University; and have been involved with research-related appointment panels at Bath Spa University [Luna] and Cyprus University of Technology [Luna, Walker], Sheffield Hallam [Walker]; University of the West of England [Walker]; York University Canada, University of Texas Austin, Bezalel Academy Israel [Leonidas], Aalto University [Leonidas].

The Department continues to edit *Typography Papers* [previously Stiff, now Kindel & Luna], which since 2005 has been published by Hyphen Press, London and distributed by Princeton Architectural Press and is internationally acknowledged as setting a quality benchmark for research and scholarship. Banham continues to edit *The Ephemera*, on behalf of the Ephemera Society, and since 2012 Walker has served as Associate Editor (archives) for *Design Issues* (MIT).

Staff have served as reviewers of journal articles, including *Ergonomics*, *Visible Language*, *British Journal of Educational Technology*, *Gerontechnology*, *The Design Journal*, *Journal of Design History*, *Journal of Design Research*, *Language and Education*, *Weather*, *Human Factors*; as reviewers for conference papers: CHI (Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems); International Conference on Typography and Visual Communication; for grant applications: Wiener Wissenschafts-, Forschungs- und Technologiefonds (Vienna Science and Technology Fund); and as judges in international competitions.

International invitations to present research include: **(design & printing history)** Grolier Club, New York [Twyman, Mosley]; Friends of the Nederlands Steendruckmuseum, Valkenswaard, Eindhoven [Twyman]; Bibliothèques d'Amiens Metropole [Mosley]; **(typeface design)** Sofia Design Week, Bulgaria; Letter2 conference, Buenos Aires; TypeCon, Milwaukee; University of Buenos Aires [Leonidas]; Bangkok University; Academy of Fine Arts, Katowice; Hong Kong Polytechnic University; National Library Kolkata [Ross]; National University of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar [De Baerdemaeker]; Typography Day 2013, Guwahati [Dyson]; **(based on Reading archives & collections)** University of Burgundy [Kindel]; University of Vienna [Burke, Kindel, Twyman, Walker].