

Institution: University of Reading
Unit of Assessment: 34 Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory – Typography
<p>a. Context</p> <p>The Department of Typography & Graphic Communication's research has three key, interrelated research strands (typeface design, design history, information design) which bear directly on the real-world contexts where information is produced and consumed, from the typeface manufacturing and publishing industries, through the public sector (schools, hospitals and government agencies), to libraries and archives. The activities of staff to engage with both professionals and end users in these contexts ensure that our research has relevance and impact.</p> <p>We transfer knowledge to, and exchange knowledge with, professional practice (which cascades to end users) through close industry collaborations in typeface and book design, through active partnerships with professional archivists in our collections-based research, and through research projects in information design that, typically, address problems in use of information that partners have identified. This knowledge transfer leads to shifts in understanding, methods and outcomes within partner organisations. Example partners include Microsoft, Monotype, Oxford University Press, Library of Congress, the Bodleian library and UK Government Departments.</p> <p>We benefit end users directly through research-based design of innovative artefacts (documents, books, typefaces, web sites) that foster public access to and use of information and services. In typeface design, for example, work for Vodafone has enabled localisation of SMS services for regional Indian scripts; in information design, projects for National Offender Management Service reduced staff/prisoner conflict in UK prisons; work for the Cabinet Office's Behavioural Insights Team has helped streamline job seekers' communication with JobCentre Plus.</p> <p>We promote our world-class collections and archives making them accessible to non-academic audiences through websites (such as http://isotyperevisited.org/) and symposia attended by curators and librarians from major national museums.</p> <p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>Our approach to impact is flexible, with different emphases, according to research area.</p> <p>2.1 Benefit to users is designed into the research we do</p> <p>Many of our funding applications (and smaller, unfunded projects) are informed by and include outcomes that will have an impact on identified user groups. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The Typographic Design for Children project (AHRC-funded, 1999-2005) used classroom research to assess the impact of typography on children's reading, resulting in a publication by the National Centre for Language and Literacy (<i>The Songs Letters Sing</i>, 2005) that continues to be in demand from teachers and educationists worldwide. – Basic research by the Centre for Information Design Research on the information needs of older people (2011) led to further collaboration with local NHS trusts on documentation to support hospital care of older people (now published research) and on-going NHS-funded collaboration on the design of information for dementia sufferers and their carers. <p>2.2 Partnership and collaboration with other bodies to extend impact</p> <p>Partnerships with industry and public sector organisations, museums and libraries link our research directly to research users' needs. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Our research strength in typefaces for global scripts has led to partnerships through institutionally supported Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) with Monotype Imaging and Merson Signs, benefiting those organisations and the UK economy. Our collaborations with global software companies have significant impact on the quality and accessibility of their products; at a smaller scale, work with leading publishers such as Harvard University Press and Brill has set standards for global typeface development. – Government departments, financial services and insurance companies have benefited from the application of our research through membership of the Simplification Centre (2009–11) which worked with them to benchmark and develop new documents for effectiveness. – A joint exhibition of chromolithography with the Musée de L'Imprimerie Lyon (2007-8) raised the profile of printed artefacts with new audiences, attracting over 11,000 visitors, as did exhibitions of the development of 17th-century typefaces at the Imprimerie Royale, Paris and, again, in Lyon.

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– Our Centre for Ephemera Studies (CES) has worked with the John Johnson Collection (Bodleian Library) and Library of Congress to develop a classification for its holdings. CES has since acquired the Rickards Collection of Ephemera and works closely with the Ephemera Foundation, welcoming members of the public to use it individually or through the CPD courses the CES runs.

2.3 Design and consultancy founded in research

The relevance and potential for impact of our research is evidenced by research-based, professional design work and consultancy undertaken by our staff. This work includes: .

2.3.1 Design work

– Historical text analyses fed into a series of multi-lingual dictionary design projects, carried out by Luna (2004; 2005), for Oxford University Press. Learning from these projects transferred to consultancy on the design of the Book of Common Prayer (Luna 2011).
– Research into typefaces for world scripts (Leonidas 2002; Ross 2002) led to 12 distinct typeface design commissions during the impact period, particularly for on-screen renderings of scripts. Our expertise supported postgraduates in projects that were taken up externally, notably Nemeth's (2011) commission by BBC World Service to develop their Arabic and Farsi web typefaces, now read daily by users across the Middle East and its diaspora.
– The children's typeface, Fabula (Walker et al 2005), has been used in diverse contexts, including a BBC school science web site, a German children's book and a children's social networking site in Brazil. The typeface (and research-based approach to typography for children) are explained on a dedicated web site, www.kidstype.org, which channels requests for advice for Walker's response.

2.3.2 Consultancy and other uptake of Departmental research

– Departmental expertise in document design process was the basis for consultancy in 2011 to GSK on process for designing medicines packaging inserts for international products.
– Our publications on the systematic testing of document design led to a request (2009) for advice by design agency, Consumption, on testing medicines packaging inserts (published research).
– Research into the impact of display medium (paper versus screen, Dyson) was cited in a 2008 Cambridge Assessment publication on marking examinations on screen and advice was sought by the Open University (2008) on the design of course materials for dyslexic students.

2.4 Public and professional engagement

We are conscious of the non-academic audiences for our research and its outcomes, and publish and exhibit our work accordingly. Some examples from the REF period include:

– Publication in the professional design press; for example, *Baseline*, *Eye* and *Progetto Grafico*
– Publications for non-designers e.g. in *Book World*, *Insight* (Pharmaceutical), *Weather* and *The Ephemera*, and media appearances e.g. BBC Radio 4 and local radio stations, Sky News Sunrise.
– Public exhibitions based on research from our collections and archives, such as our AHRC-funded *Isotype Revisited*, exhibited at the V&A (2010-11), launched in collaboration with the Austrian Cultural Forum and reported in UK and US mainstream press, as well as design press (leading to current exploration of re-exhibiting in Vienna); our AHRC-funded research *Designing Information for Everyday Life*, 2010 exhibited at St Bride Library, reviewed in popular design press.
– Involvement in organising conferences to bring together researchers and practitioners, such as: ATypl, the leading international conference for typeface designers and manufacturers (Leonidas, Lund, Ross, Walker), and Information Design Association (Walker) for user-centred and service designers and technical authors
– Our historical reconstruction research (e.g. May and Twyman, 2004) interests groups beyond print historians. Our re-constructed printing presses are in demand for TV and Radio coverage of printing history, most notably appearing in Stephen Fry's 2008 *The Machine That Made Us*.
– At an informal level most of our project work is supported by targeted web pages or blogs to engage readers who might not access our research through academic publications.

2.5 Workshops and courses based on research

Targeted workshop and courses for specific groups spread the impact of Departmental research work and bring in funding to support its development. For example:

– Our annual Summer School in Typeface Design, based on our research, attracts design professionals and (since 2009) has been attended by 54 participants.
– Our new (2010 onwards) CPD training in Information Design has been completed by 23 non-design professionals.

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- A collaborative workshop (2012) on Black Ephemera, with politician, Patrick Vernon, attracted a wide-ranging audience of 60 participants, and generated further interest in related collaboration.
- Our collection of printing equipment, which has been central to research in historical reconstruction, is the basis for practical courses in print-making for print historians and the public.

2.6 Extending impact through influencing the education of students in overseas institutions

In the REF period, our research-based approach to design influenced teaching in universities in Brazil, India, Israel and Norway; for example, Bezalel Academy, Jerusalem, consulted Leonidas on training to build research into teaching practitioners' career plans; Ross was funded by AHRC/ British Library to give research workshops at the National Library, Kolkata. Our influence in India is likely to be formalised through a collaborative MA in typeface design with the University of Kolkata.

c. Strategy and plans

We believe that our research is strengthened by connection with its users through collaboration, partnership, public engagement and CPD, and that research staff should be encouraged to pursue these to the highest standards. We will further enhance our current approach to impact by:

- ensuring that research impact is **an integral part of research planning**, for example, at research away days; and that impact is reported formally at research meetings
- supporting and **influencing research leaders** of the future by ensuring that our postgraduate students are involved in thinking about the impact of their work from the start of their studies
- **monitoring the impact of our work** by ensuring mechanisms for feedback are built into project planning (e.g. web analytics, questionnaires, interviews) and feedback is reviewed and acted upon
- seeking research and **knowledge exchange projects** to support our commitment to interdisciplinary research that is relevant to society. We are, for example, collaborating with the University's Meteorology Department and contributing to University involvement in the Oxford Academic Health Sciences Network with a view to extending impact both within and beyond the University
- **encouraging and supporting collaboration with non-academic partners** through joint research projects, placements for staff or research students, consultancy; on the basis of successful and valuable collaborations to date, we are currently targeting the pharmaceutical industry as a potential extension to existing research collaborators
- **engaging public and professional audiences** through showcasing the impact, relevance and benefit of our research at events: public lectures, exhibitions, seminars, and workshops (e.g. Black's invitation by leading designers Siegel and Gale to participate in a public panel for London Design Week 2012), and through media appearances and blogging activity of members of staff
- **drawing attention to the impact potential of our research, by actively seeking external recognition** through competitions/awards, such as the Queen's Anniversary Prize, awarded in 2011, which, among other things, recognised the impact of our research
- recognising and **supporting staff training needs** in skills for writing for different audiences, dealing with the press and public speaking; ensuring that impact is part of the discussion at Staff Development Reviews
- seeking opportunities to **develop understanding and reach** of the discipline, such as Banham and Twyman's membership of the decision-making panel for the future of the St Bride Library
- developing **CPD programmes arising from our research strengths** building on the success of the Typeface Design Summer School and non-specialist training in Information Design
- **welcoming members of the public** to the university's volunteer training scheme to continue work on cataloguing and digitising our collections and archives.

d. Relationship to case studies

There is a strong relationship between our strategy and case studies, both of which demonstrate our approach to impact. 'Enriching communities of literacy' demonstrates success in knowledge transfer and public exemplification of research; 'Design for everyday reading' shows strength in inter-disciplinary partnership working. Both case studies make reference to use of archival materials held in the Department and hence connect to the broader scope of Departmental research and strategy. As this document shows, however, our strategy is applied across the scope of Departmental research, beyond that highlighted in the case studies.