

Institution: University of Lincoln
Unit of Assessment: 29 English Language and Literature
Title of case study: Engaging the public with 21st-century literature
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Lincoln's research in 21st century literature and publishing has impacted upon local, national and global audiences. 21st century literature is unique in that: 1) opinion over which texts are considered to be the most valuable has not yet been firmly formed; and 2) critical sources on 21st century texts are sparse and often publicly inaccessible.</p> <p>Lincoln's research into this area has had a direct, demonstrable influence on a BIS committee recommendation for government policy on open access in the UK and on top-level academic and government thinkers in Europe and Japan. Lincoln's open access publications, <i>Alluvium</i> and <i>Orbit</i>, break down the barriers between the public and academia to enhance the discussions of contemporary writing that are hosted at the university. Through discussions at live readings and performances and on internet channels, public audiences are invited to experience contemporary writing first-hand, and to participate in easily accessible online discussions about contemporary literature with internationally-leading scholars. Lincoln's strong research in this field – widely disseminated through high-profile conferences, a research group, a website, social media channels and two leading open access online journals – has been centred around creating a dialogue with the public, with a specific focus on schools and young people. The social and educational impact includes education about contemporary writers and their writing, the involvement of the public in forging opinion about what is valuable in 21st century literature, and influencing school teachers in their teaching practices</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>English at Lincoln has an international reputation for strong research in 21st century literature and publishing. Researchers at Lincoln have made a significant contribution to the study of contemporary literature in all academic media. The unifying research perspective is framed through two questions: 1) how do we describe and analyse the contemporary?; and 2) how can we read the politics of contemporary representation? Siân Adiseshiah (2004-) has a substantial reputation in contemporary theatre through her monograph, <i>Churchill's Socialism: Political Resistance in the Plays of Caryl Churchill</i> (CSP, 2009), and publications on 21st century literature in peer-reviewed international journals, including in <i>C21 Literature</i> (article published in 2012). She is co-editor (with Rupert Hildyard, also at Lincoln) of <i>Twenty-First Century Fiction</i> (Palgrave, 2013) and has co-edited Issue 2 of <i>C21</i> (October 2013). Adiseshiah is also on the editorial boards of the <i>Journal of Gender Studies</i> and <i>C21</i>. This research in 21st century drama and fiction directly underpins the impact activities in this case study. Adiseshiah's interest in shaping critical opinion of 21st century literature has led directly to the impact activities centred on involving and educating teachers, pupils and the wider public in understanding and engaging with 21st century literature.</p> <p>Martin Paul Eve (January 2013-), an ECR, is building a prominent position in late-20th and 21st century American fiction, in addition to being well-known for his work on open access to scholarly research. Eve has published on contemporary fiction in <i>C21</i> and <i>Neo-Victorian Studies</i> while at Lincoln, and is an editor of both <i>Alluvium</i> and <i>Orbit</i>. Both Eve and Edwards have been invited to contribute to the forthcoming <i>Routledge Companion to Contemporary Literature</i> (Routledge, 2014) and Eve has a forthcoming monograph on Thomas Pynchon with Palgrave Macmillan. Eve's ongoing research at Lincoln into scholarly publishing practices, on which he has published in <i>Insights</i> journal, a piece for the British Academy, articles for the <i>The Guardian</i>, <i>Library Journal</i>, <i>The Author</i> and <i>The Conversation</i>, among others, led to him giving evidence at a House of Commons inquiry and to speak alongside government ministers in Norway and leading figures in academic publishing in Tokyo and at Harvard, all in 2013.</p> <p>Early career researcher, Caroline Edwards (2011-2013), is establishing a reputation as a leading scholar in 21st century literary criticism, with publications in journals such as <i>Modern Fiction Studies</i> and <i>Textual Practice</i>. Edwards is Founding and Commissioning Editor of acclaimed open access journal <i>Alluvium</i>.</p>

Much of this research underpins our regular internationally significant conferences in the field (two 'What Happens Now' conferences [2010, 2012]; Maggie Gee [2012]; 'Interrogating Trauma in the Humanities' [2012]; China Miéville [2012]; and Adam Roberts [2013]). The biennial 'What Happens Now' conferences have attracted more than 100 delegates at each event from 17 countries including Australia, USA, Taiwan and throughout Europe; this, along with the conferences on Miéville and Roberts received coverage in *The Guardian*. Taken together, these conferences have established Lincoln's outstanding reputation for attracting international scholars of 21st century literature, publishers, critics and journalists, as well as members of the public. High-profile public events include readings by Will Self, Carol Ann Duffy, China Miéville, Maggie Gee and Adam Roberts, and a performance of Tim Crouch's *my arm*. In addition, shaping the next generation of researchers is also a crucial part of Lincoln's practice. In 2011 the institution launched the world's first MA in 21st Century Literature, and the team sponsors a 21st-century literary reading group for the public, led by graduates of this MA programme

3. References to the research

Key outputs

Siân Adiseshiah, 'Political Returns on the 21st Century Stage: Caryl Churchill's *Far Away, Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?* and *Seven Jewish Children*', *C21 Literature: Journal of 21st-century Writings* 1 (2012).

Siân Adiseshiah, *Churchill's Socialism: Political Resistance in the Plays of Caryl Churchill*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2009.

Siân Adiseshiah and Rupert Hildyard (eds.), *Twenty-First Century Fiction: What Happens Now*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013.

Caroline Edwards, 'Rethinking the Arcadian Revenge: Metachronous Times in the Fiction of Sam Taylor,' *Modern Fiction Studies* 58 (3) (2012), pp. 477-502.

Eve, Martin Paul, 'Before the Law: Open Access, Quality Control and the Future of Peer Review', in *Debating Open Access*, ed. by Nigel Vincent and Chris Wickham (London: British Academy, 2013), pp. 68–81.

Martin Paul Eve, 'The Botnet: Webs of Hegemony/Zombies Who Publish', in *Zombies in the Academy*, ed. by Andrew Wheelan, Chris Moore, and Ruth Walker (Bristol: Intellect Press, 2013), pp. 103–117.

4. Details of the impact

Researchers in 21st century literature at Lincoln have worked to exploit the beneficial potential of their research through a strategy of targeted dissemination of activities 1) by engaging a wider audience through open events and online magazine *Alluvium* in contributing to the ways in which 21st century literature is understood; 2) by inviting school children, teachers and the wider public to reflect on recent significant political and social events as mediated through literature and drama; and 3) in these ways by influencing the wider public's understanding of, and secondary teaching practice with regard to, 21st century literature.

Working at the forefront of digital technologies, publishing strategies and political policy, **Eve** and **Edwards** have embraced the public dissemination of research on 21st-century literature in the creation of two new 'gold' open access (free to read) journals, *Alluvium* [2012] and *Orbit: Writing Around Pynchon* [2012], which have rapidly established global readerships beyond Higher Education. The open access nature of the Lincoln-based *Alluvium* and *Orbit*, coupled with strong social media interaction built on the back of **Eve's** and **Edwards'** academic reputations as a result of their research in *MFS* and *C21* and **Adiseshiah's** *Twenty-First Century Fiction*, has had a tangible social impact in forging international cooperation and dialogue centred around contemporary literature. *Alluvium* has attracted a substantial following beyond the academy, receiving 9,623 unique visitors from 48 different countries, demonstrating considerable international reach. Developed out of **Eve's**, **Adiseshiah's** and **Edwards'** published research on 21st century literature and literary criticism, *Alluvium* shows early signs of transforming the relationship between higher and secondary education where the appetite for concise, accessible scholarship is changing both teaching practice and students' approaches to 21st century literature. A teacher from Bristol Grammar school, Roland Clare, talks about referring 'aspiring literary students to [*Alluvium*] because it's such an attractive portal into a world where people are writing

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about ... literary issues because that's the kind of animals we are, rather than because it's on the boring syllabus.' George Holt, a Bristol Grammar student, says: 'I truly found reading some of your articles exciting and educating ... In my mind this website is a more personal... literature centric version of Wikipedia.' **Eve** also runs the annual 'Pynchon in Public Day' from Lincoln, where participants worldwide – most of whom are outside of Higher Education – interact online to demonstrate their appreciation of Pynchon's writing, to which **Eve's** widely-disseminated research directly contributes. William Davis, a non-academic, talks of finding it 'gratifying' to have the 'opportunity to join that level of discussion.' This annual event, which developed into an international community of cultural and intellectual exchange in which many individuals (such as Davis and Jim Lawrence) now recommend **Eve's** work to Pynchon newcomers on Twitter, has already had a positive educational impact and full-article coverage in *The Guardian*, *The New York Daily News* and *The LA Times*. Micha Knerr explains that Eve's research-informed blog posts 'make [him] want to deal more with this demanding kind of literature, and read [Pynchon's work] by looking at the themes [**Eve**] point[s] out in [his] posts more closely'. The event has also had economic impact upon Greg Thomas' Los Angeles-based business, Trystero Coffee (which takes its title from one of Pynchon's novels), which has seen an increase in sales owing to media coverage for the event: 'Pynchon in Public Day has provided an absolute benefit to my small endeavour along with a literary benefit to the local community'.

With Lincoln colleagues in Performing Arts, **Adiseshiah** has enhanced the impact of their practice as research through the co-organisation of annual research-informed festivals on contemporary playwrights, where performances in the Lincoln Performing Arts Centre are followed by post-show discussions involving the local community. The March 2010 'Caryl Churchill Festival' included a student site-specific performance of *Seven Jewish Children* with an audience of over 100 members of the public, university employees and students. The festival's profile and impact were significantly raised by the post-show discussion hosted by **Adiseshiah**, which included two speakers, Dr Anna Bernard and Professor Moché Machover. Feedback from the event demonstrated appreciation of this rare opportunity to discuss the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as represented in performance. Elizabeth Groucutt, who teaches Language at South Wolverhampton and Bilston Academy, made particular reference to the educational benefits of the event, saying 'the site-specific performance of *Seven Jewish Children* – really helped me to think about new ways of using our new spaces'. The festival also hosted a collaborative project coordinated by Performing Arts Lecturer, Martin Curtis, who drew on **Adiseshiah's** research to work with North Kesteven local secondary school on Churchill's 1982 play, *Top Girls*. After collaboratively exploring *Top Girls* and its 21st century relevance through workshops, the project culminated with Lincoln Performing Arts students and North Kesteven students performing scenes of *Top Girls* and contemporary adaptations of it to sell-out audiences during the festival. Drama teacher, Rachel Yarsley, considered it a valuable educational and social experience for the students. Collaborating with university students helped with improving the confidence and ambitions of the pupils, and the experience has contributed to the shaping of drama teaching in the school.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- 1) Martin Paul Eve, 'Evidence to House of Commons Select Committee Inquiry', in *Inquiry into Open Access. Fifth report of session 2013-2014.*, by House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skills Committee (London: House of Commons, 2013), pp. Ev20–Ev27, Ev68–Ev69.
- 2) Alluvium Journal: <http://www.alluvium-journal.org/>.
- 3) For Alluvium usage data see:
<https://www.martineve.com/Google%20Analytics/Alluvium%20Google%20Analytics%203a.png>
- 4) Orbit: <https://www.pynchon.net>.
- 5) 21st Century Research Group Website: <http://www.lincoln.ac.uk/home/humanities/history/21c/>.
- 6) 21st Century Research Group blog: <http://21cresearchgroup.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/> [see Testimonials for the quotations from Knerr, Clare, Holt, Davis and Groucutt].
- 7) Greg Thomas, manager of Trystero Coffee – <http://www.trysterocoffee.com>.