

Institution: Aberystwyth University

Unit of Assessment: D36 Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management

a. Context

Research activity in the Department of Information Studies has long been designed to impact upon the information profession. Specifically the Department's research impacts upon librarians, archivists, records managers, museum curators, information and knowledge managers in the public, private and third sectors, information systems analysts, together with individuals employed in publishing and the book trade; designers, developers and managers of information systems and information services in all types of organizations in the public and sector, nationally and internationally. The main types of impact include:-

(1) Impact from research which underpins and informs professional practice, examples include: the Balanced Palette (Foster, Ferguson-Boucher and Broady-Preston); DCC Curation Lifecycle Model (Higgins); digital forensics and cloud computing (Ferguson-Boucher and Covery); information seeking behaviour (Ellis, Foster); information storage and retrieval (Ellis, Rafferty); and knowledge management (Broady-Preston, Ellis, Ferguson-Boucher, and Preston).

(2) The creation of impact through the application of models and theories to information work and practice from other disciplines, examples include: the Balanced Scorecard (Broady-Preston and Preston); Change cycle (Broady-Preston). Process and structural models of Knowledge management (Ellis). Grounded Theory, Arenas/social worlds theory, discourse and situational analysis (Ellis). Semantic and Genre approaches to knowledge organization (Rafferty).

(3) Impact through the systematic and rigorous evaluation of policies, processes and procedures in relation to professional practice – examples include: Evaluating the Departments Library (Simon and Horton); Quality, value and impact assessment (Broady-Preston; Preston).

(4) Research impact which conceptualises and defines the knowledge base of the profession, including innovative delivery and Continuing Professional Development and frameworks for skills and competencies (Broady-Preston; Ferguson-Boucher; Higgins; Preston; Simon).

(5) Research which informs and provides models to underpin Digital Assessment Management providing impact in a variety of contexts locally, nationally and internationally (Higgins, Ferguson-Boucher).

b. Approach to impact

The Department has fostered a culture of engagement with the information profession through organising and participating in training events, nationally and internationally for information professionals, often jointly with professional organizations. Staff participate in professional activities, and provide advice to professional organizations. Key vehicles for these relationships include:

(1) The development of the Aberystwyth Information Research Seminars (AIRS) series), delivered in partnership with the National Library of Wales (NLW) and the Information Services Directorate, Aberystwyth University, begun in 2010/11 is a prime example of such research impact and engagement.

(2) Internationally, impact is demonstrated by staff participation in organising research-based events for a professional audience at major conferences such as the annual IFLA World Library and Information Congress, in addition to presenting invited papers (Broady-Preston) and membership of steering groups such as the UK Experts Group for Digital Curation which is an international collaboration integrating research and practice in the field (Higgins).

(3) Nationally, staff play a leading role in the 'Umbrella' conferences organised by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) (Broady-Preston) the Society of Archivists/ARA annual conference and satellite events (Ferguson-Boucher; Hill; Higgins; Schulz) , and the annual Welsh Libraries, Archives and Museums conference and associated workshops (Broady-Preston; Preston). Key examples include the Forum for Archives and Records Managers Education and Research (FARMER) conference organised and held in Aberystwyth in 2009 (Hill), and the 'Research into Practice' Workshop delivered at the 2010 Welsh Libraries, Archives and Museums conference (Broady-Preston).

(4) Consultancy, workshop and seminar activity for the profession, based on research output is also a key feature of the DIS impact strategy, including facilitating evidence-based practice (Broady-Preston; Ferguson-Boucher; Higgins; Schulz; Simon). Examples of this include several Collaborative Doctoral Awards with bodies such as Cymru Museums Archives and Libraries (CyMAL) and NLW leading to the development of joint network bids to AHRC (Broady-Preston; Ellis) and the Cloud Computing "Unconference" in Manchester in 2010 (Ferguson-Boucher and Schulz). Membership of the IFLA Section committees which organise and deliver relevant research-based events to the annual world congress or via satellite events is a crucial element in maintaining and developing relationships (Broady-Preston), as is membership of the CyMAL Advisory Group for Libraries.

(5) Staff are encouraged to publish papers in the professional press based on their research, and these form an integral element of the dissemination strategy of all Departmental research projects. Recent examples include: Broady-Preston (RAE opinion piece Update); Ferguson-Boucher (Cloud computing IEEE Security and Privacy Magazine); Higgins (Archival Standards in ARA Newsletter); Simon (Evaluating the Department's library in Public Library Journal LJ and Y Ddolen).

The Department encourages and supports applications for funding for impact. Successful applications include funding to facilitate interaction with the profession includes grants from CILIP to finance attendance at the IFLA World congress and conferences (Broady-Preston; Simon); CyMAL, (Broady-Preston; Horton; Simon); The Kathleen Cook Bequest for professional development (Broady-Preston), Society of Archivists (Ferguson-Boucher; Hill), The National Archive (Higgins) and the Aberystwyth University Learned Societies Fund (all staff). This approach to impact extends to postgraduate students. Monies generated from the 2009 FARMER conference have been used subsequently to establish bursaries for Postgraduate students to attend inter-disciplinary and professionally focused conferences. The Department successfully bid for a Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarship to investigate the digitisation of special collections in Wales.

c. Strategy and plans

Interaction with the profession is a central tenet of the DIS Research Strategy and Action Plan. Staff are expected to demonstrate evidence of professional engagement and dissemination of their research to a wider audience in their individual Research Action Plans (RAPs), which are reviewed bi-annually with their research mentor. The Department supports staff financially, in addition to formal recognition of the activities described in Section b) above in calculating staff workloads. Additionally, staff are positively encouraged to develop relationships and acquire experience in communicating their research to a wide

Impact template (REF3a)

variety of audiences, including presentations to professional bodies, formal and informal, in addition to careers and schools' fairs. Thus, staff have good working partnerships and relationships with colleagues in all the National Libraries of the UK, government bodies such as CyMAL and TNA, school, college, public and university libraries; information provision in law firms, banks and the health sector, in addition to smaller specialist groups such as the Architecture librarians. The Departmental Advisory body consists of noted professionals, and together with the departmental Fellows, (many of whom are currently in practice), forms a symbiotic link and synergy between DIS research output and contemporary practice.

These relationships are often more formally based, with DIS staff working in conjunction with colleagues in practice in establishing and creating research networks and working conjointly on research council funding bids and calls (Broady-Preston; Higgins; Hill). The Pathways to Impact is now embodied in all research applications and the interaction between members of staff and the information profession as well as those outside the information profession as exemplified in the Aberyswyth Information Research Seminars. The potential for collaboration with members of staff in the School of Management and Business and the Department of Law in the new Institute of Management, Law and Information Science, provides opportunities for research across the information spectrum.

Our strategy acknowledges the central role of information within human society and the relevance of information theory to generate real world solutions. In order to fully develop these themes we plan to engage in multidiscipline and multinational collaborations such as those represented by the CDC initiative.

d. Relationship to case studies

The case studies presented here offer an illustration of areas of current impact and we see the continued engagement of the department in research that is relevant as a key function of our continued approach to the deployment of research from information theory in the real world.

(1) Professional knowledge and skills and the information profession - explores the Department's understanding of the concept of "professionalism", including deriving a contemporary understanding of the nature, skills and competences of the information profession. This demonstrates an engagement with the information profession through the development of Continuing Professional Development Schemes, nationally and internationally, and in the formulation of skills and competencies frameworks.

(2) Managing digital assets - engages with contemporary concerns with digitisation, whether digitised or born digital, and the need for the development of models for practice based lifecycle models for the management of digital assets at local, national and international levels.

Research activity will continue to identify likely impacts, in line with the requirements of funding applications and the justification of resources. The transfer of research knowledge and findings to the environment is a priority for the Department and the two case studies exemplify this impact strategy.