

<b>Institution: Brunel University</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 36 Communication, Cultural and Media Studies</b>
<p><b>a. Context</b></p> <p>Different forms of impact are structured to a significant extent by the specific strategies of the two research groups, the Screen Media Research Centre (SMRC) and the Centre for Advanced Journalism Practice (CAJP), although with some points of overlap. Beneficiaries range from those involved in significant areas of policy-making and public debate to general civil society, in the contribution made to the development of areas of policy such as media regulation. They also range from the specific – in cases such as knowledge transfer activities relating to campaigning groups or impact on industry – to the general, in broader contributions to public understanding of media institutions, activities and their outputs. Impact is closely structured into some research from the start, including work on media regulation that straddles the two research centres, while some of its broader cultural forms are less explicit in the original motivation for the work.</p> <p>Several areas of screen media research have implications for policy at government or institutional level and had impact through consultation with national bodies on issues of media regulation, child internet safety and young people’s engagement with television news. Research on various aspects of media regulation by Petley informed consultations including evidence to Ofcom, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport’s select enquiry into Press Standards, Privacy and Libel, a governance review of the Press Complaints Committee, and the Leveson inquiry into press standards. Petley’s work gains a wider public platform in his role as chair of the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom. He was also an advisor to the UK Council for Child Internet Safety’s Byron review.</p> <p>A wider range of research within the submission has made a contribution to cultural life in ways that cannot easily be pinned down or measured in terms of individually identifiable impacts. We live in a world substantially defined and understood through commercial and other media products such as film, television, journalism and videogames. Understanding of these products of the kind offered by the work in this submission (their forms, the ways they create particular meanings, the industrial/institutional frameworks in which these are shaped or determined) offers an important contribution to society as a whole, beyond the academic sphere. Much of the research has also had educational impact, in helping to shape the study of particular aspects of media well beyond the confines of the submitting HEI. King’s work on American independent cinema from 2005, for example, played a key role in the substantial development of the teaching of the subject during the REF period, in the US as well as in the UK and elsewhere. Niblock’s reflexive research into journalism practice has also gained wider impact through her co-option onto the Quality and Standards board of the National Council for the Training of Journalists.</p>
<p><b>b. Approach to impact</b></p> <p>Research in Screen Media and Journalism reflects the culture of promoting research ‘for the benefit of individuals and society at large’, as stated in the Royal Charter of 1966 that has characterized the University from its inception. Approaches to impact vary across the work included in this submission. In some cases, impact in areas such as public policy and debate has always been at the heart of the work involved. This is the case in the public campaigning that is a central dimension of Petley’s work on media regulation and in the education and campaigning dimension of Wayne’s work around the two film productions cited below and on media politics more generally. A similarly close and integral connection can be traced in the impact of Parsler’s work on game design, the research questions having in this case grown directly out of a demand for greater understanding of the impact of particular game mechanics in their commercial/practical application. In other cases, the broader social or cultural impact of more traditional academic research on film, television, games, journalism or other media, has been more diffuse and less easy to specify, and has played a less central role in the original motivation for the work.</p> <p>Research in journalism has entailed substantial and sustained connections with the spheres of industry and the wider sphere of public policy and regulation, in work that entails close engagement with key users to identify and respond to their needs. Hughes’ research, developed in conjunction with partners in industry and the regulatory system, addresses institutional and political concerns about contemporary transformations in the news. This also includes pressing issues relating to apparent withdrawal of public service requirements for broadcast license holders.</p>

## Impact template (REF3a)

Hughes has produced a number of high-profile reports on major issues of media policy disseminated at the highest level of government. One, commissioned by the Department for International Development, investigated the utility of government funds spent on media programs. The other, commissioned by the International Broadcasting Trust, examined the role of statutory regulation of broadcast content in relation to current affairs programming. Niblock's research on local news journalism has impacted on public debate about the future of media ownership, as evidenced by her invitation to draft questions for a House of Commons Select Committee. She was also selected as the education representative on the Convergence Journalism Skills Survey in 2009, organized by Skillset in conjunction with journalism accreditation bodies. A key strategy has been to foster links with news organizations and regulators, the result of which has included recent partnerships with Trinity Mirror and the Periodicals Training Council. The work of Dick on the importance of Search Engine Optimization for news organizations responded to the needs of, and been delivered to, industry-oriented audiences through conferences and publications. He has also provided training workshops on similar topics to campaigning groups including Greenpeace. Niblock was one of the authors of two submissions to the Leveson Inquiry: by Dart Center's UK bureau and the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ). Her knowledge-exchange project with the NCTJ in 2010, examining the impact of digital technology on news values, led to her becoming the representative of the higher education sector on the council's Quality and Standards Board, directly impacting on national training policy.

A number of substantial recommendations were sent to senior broadcasters following the completion in 2008 of the three-year AHRC-funded project 'Television News, Young People and Politics: Generation Disconnected', a project led by Wayne that involved staff in both screen media and journalism. Wider dissemination of the findings was achieved through the publication of a co-authored book in 2010 and symposium on the state of contemporary British television, an event that generated a number of policy and funding proposals.

Karpovich's EPSRC-funded TOTeM project (Tales of Things and Electronic Memory), exploring novel use of communications technology in relation to memories associated with objects, had significant commercial and social impact. Part of the research, involving the memory-tagging of items on sale in a store, helped raise more than £200,000 for Oxfam. Personal enrichment was also gained by members of ethnic minority groups and WW2 veterans involved in the project, including the production of two feature-length documentaries and a series of short videos about their memories. An ESPRC report cited it as an example offering 'strong evidence' of user engagement (<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/documents/RCUKDEconReport.pdf>).

A strong, impact-oriented campaigning dimension accompanies much of the research cited above by Petley and that led by Wayne on television and young people. The latter co-produced/directed a feature-length documentary film, *Listen To Venezuela*, an intervention into debates about the nature of the Venezuelan revolution, screened in numerous venues, including independent cinemas, bookshops and cafes. A project funded by a Leverhulme Trust 'Study Abroad' award of £15,000, the film contested assumptions of mainstream media coverage. It also created educational impact within Venezuela, the filmmaking being combined via participant-observation with teaching at university level, within schools and in local barrio communities. The same kinds of impact informed the subsequent production of a theatrical production and documentary feature inspired by Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, produced with the aid of £17,617 from the university Knowledge Transfer Fund, enabling working people to work collaboratively and creatively to articulate and disseminate their own stories as part of a class narrative. Significant impact was also achieved by *The Olympic Side of London*, directed by Rugo, a documentation of tensions in East London on the eve of the 2012 Olympics narrated by the writer Iain Sinclair, a feature-length production distributed internationally in theatrical release and TV sales. Cieplak's work on representations of Africa has carried over into more general challenges to prevailing media cliché in his role as publications and communications officer for the Africa Research Institute, one that includes the co-writing of briefings circulated to policymakers, journalists and NGO and available for public view online. Impact on the community local to Brunel was achieved by a showcase festival of films from the EMI, Hillingdon and Pathé archives, accompanied by research-based talks, an event that received a total of £7,000 funding from Film London's Community Pilot programme, the Cathedral Group and Hillingdon Council.

**Impact template (REF3a)**

Research on cult media has also included direct engagement with industry and practitioners, to the benefit of the latter, through the high-profile Cine-Excess series of conference/festival events and partnership in the creation of a new DVD/Blu-Ray label. Research has been similarly translated to non-academic users in the ongoing annual series of Documentary Now conferences organized within the SMRC, events that have run throughout the REF period.

Much of the work that has gained broader cultural impact is written and published in formats designed to be accessible to a broader audience. Research has also been disseminated beyond academia through sources such as reviews and or citation in media coverage. Lashmar's work on investigative journalism and related issues, for example, resulted in media appearances, including more than 20 broadcast interviews in 2011. Similar public dissemination has come through channels such as contributions to prominent campaigning websites or blogs. Lashmar also gave evidence to the House of Lords Communication Committee in 2011, part of an inquiry into the future of UK investigative journalism, and is an adviser to the Center for Investigative Reporting.

**c. Strategy and plans**

Impact is closely structured into current and future strategy at university level, through support by the Research Developed and Support Office for the development and understanding of this dimension of research. The university has produced an 'Impact Planning and Review Toolkit' in which staff are offered training. Impact is also embedded in criteria used in the evaluation of applications for research leave or other funding and those considered in promotions and the employment of new staff. Understanding impact is part of the training course taken by all new staff. The School of Arts has also developed its own strategy, including mechanisms to identify and build upon existing areas of impact strength across subjects and encouraging staff to take advantage of university-level resources. Each of the research centres has an impact champion. A focus on impact features strongly in the ongoing and future plans of both the SMRC and the CAJP, at all of the levels embraced in this submission. In many cases, direct forms of impact will continue to be closely structured into the research from the start, building directly on that included above. A notable example is the contribution to policy and public debate constituted by Petley's ongoing work on media regulation, including scrutiny of new forms of post-Leveson policy. The same is true in various other instances, including ongoing KT partnerships between journalism and organizations such as NGOs and charities. Hughes will work with Ofcom to look at the broader process of withdrawal from regulation and policing by regulators. She is also developing a project with Trinity Mirror to investigate new business models for news outlets. Broader forms of cultural impact will also continue to follow from a wide range of continued research into an extensive range of types of film, television, digital games, journalism and other media. Future strategy includes plans to increase the breadth of dissemination of such work through further use of non-traditional means such as blogs and other forms of online and/or social media, in addition to future documentary film projects. A more pro-active strategy is also being developed to include more explicit and direct impact dimensions in current or future research projects, particularly through bids for funding. This is in line with university and school strategy to put impact factors increasingly at the centre of funding bids, to increase their chances of success in a context in which this dimension is seen as increasingly important by the research councils and other sources of funding.

**d. Relationship to case studies**

The case studies provide more detailed illustration of some of the varied strategies and approaches outlined above. 'Media policy, regulation and censorship' exemplifies impact on policy-making process and public debate at the highest national level and provides a model for further work in this and related areas. It is an example of a variety of impact that is inseparably connected with the subject matter of the underpinning research. The latter is also the case with 'New understandings of player agency used to improve digital games', the basis of which is a form of impact that follows specifically and directly from the academic research involved. The Condition of the Working Class' is an example of the achievement of impact through the combination of campaigning research with practical outputs, one of several examples that use the medium of documentary film and related practices. In each case, these provide models for future forms of impact, whether these originate in the same organic manner or are dimensions of projects developed specifically in order to generate additional impact of this kind.