

Institution: University of East Anglia

Unit of Assessment: 36 Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management

a. Context

The unit's interest in the popular (across media) emphasises an approach that maps the contexts of media production and circulation: including production conditions, textual content, promotion, dissemination, reception and audiences across film, television and new media.

The unit has identified a range of non-academic user groups, beneficiaries and audiences during the assessment period: from national broadcasters and production companies (building research relationships with ITV and the BBC), to regional media (continued engagement with Anglia Television, Screen East and the East Anglian Film Archive); from regional/national media-based festivals (Turkish Film Festival, Edinburgh Film Festival, Norwich Sound & Vision Festival) and educational bodies (Film Club, Film Education), to distribution and exhibition companies (Picturehouse Cinemas, Studio Canal UK, Network DVD). Media audiences are also an important component within the unit's work, and are engaged with via the examples listed above, and specific events at local cinemas, festivals, and community organisations.

Based on those groups, therefore, the unit has identified the main types of impact arising from its research as ranging across:

- Influencing or developing media companies' working practices (working with BBC Research and Development on the future of 3-D, engaging with television comedy writers to enhance the comedy commissioning process, using research to advise DVD companies)
- Contributing to policy debates (working with regional and national bodies such as Creative Arts East and the British Film Institute (BFI) in relation to issues of cinema exhibition)
- Cultural life (expanding audience knowledge and awareness of debates around media, including research strengths around gender, genre and national cinemas: this is undertaken via media discourse – see below – public lectures, introductions to film screenings, materials made available via DVD)
- Public discourse (expanding or contributing to public debates via media sources such as BBC Radio (the *Today* programme, *Woman's Hour*), regional/national newspapers (*The Guardian*, *The Telegraph*, *Norwich Evening News*), BBC and ITV television programmes (*The Wright Stuff*), and online sites (the Huffington Post).

b. Approach to impact

The unit's approach to impact during the assessment period has focused on two specific contexts: projects that have expanded on existing partnerships and external non-HEI relationships; and those that have developed out of engagement activity. In both cases, the unit has encouraged a range of activities through training, financial and time-based investment, and worked with individual staff (or research teams) to develop and enhance key projects where more definite impact can be achieved and evidenced.

An impact working group was established in March 2010 to raise broader awareness of impact activity among staff, and position impact at the centre of ongoing research activity. The working group has introduced regular information updates, staff training sessions and individual sessions to encourage and support engagement and impact activities for this assessment period and beyond. The goal of the group was to disseminate successful case studies of engagement and impact and encourage a more holistic, embedded approach to impact within individual research plans.

Existing and new partnerships

The working group helped highlight and develop key historic, current and new partnerships with a range of media institutions:

- Mills' current AHRC-funded work on the British comedy industry, an extension of his previous work in this field, uses existing contacts to explore the role of individual writers, and create intended impacts around industry interaction and support networks

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- Jancovich's research into audiences and exhibition (a development of previous work on histories of cinema-going) engaged with industry contacts and resulted in a conference that brought those in distribution and exhibition together with academics working in the area, and led to establishing a new network (www.nfceonline.com) to facilitate future engagement.
- Denison's work with the Japanese embassy and other sites of cultural exhibition of Japanese media led to closer working relationships with DVD distributors of Japanese films on DVD, feeding into the AHRC-funded project 'Manga Movies: Contemporary Japanese Cinema, Media Franchising and Transnational Adaptation'
- Johnston, Williams and Tasker have continued the School's strong association with the BFI around British cinema heritage via numerous projects including: a 2012 'revisionist' BFI season (and accompanying book) on Ealing Studios; British film and television in the 1950s; women in the British film and television industries
- The East Anglian Film Archive (EAFA), the regional repository of tens of thousands of films and television shows produced in, and featuring, the region, fuels several community engagement and impact activities: preserving geographically specific archive material for the public; offering a range of research resources for historical studies of media in the region; storing and cataloguing material for local/regional broadcasters (BBC East, Anglia Television); and enabling public access to archival footage through regular film screenings and events through the region, and through a website, www.eafa.org.uk.

Evidence of these activities has been provided by institutions and companies through testimonials and references such as Adrian Cooke (Director, Norwich Sound & Vision Festival), who noted how the work of the unit is 'expanding the scope of the festival'; through invitations to be involved in larger policy initiatives or institutional development (Jancovich and Aveyard's work with BAFTA; Rimmer's involvement with Community Music East); and the increased esteem and public presence of particular individuals within the unit (Denison's work with the Japanese Embassy, Atakav's work with Film Club). Additionally, work around film and media festivals, screening introductions, and DVD releasing companies can be augmented with sales or audience figures from groups such as Picturehouse Cinemas, the Turkish Film Festival, or Studio Canal UK.

Impact arising from existing engagement activities

The working group identified key research strengths where impact and engagement were ongoing: staff engaged in feminist media studies (with particular focus on gender and representation) were already involved in wider public debates as an intrinsic component of their research. For example, Atakav's work on women, Islam and the media provoked consideration discussion in the media, and led to interviews on *Woman's Hour* and writing for the Huffington Post. Members of the unit provided essays for the BFI that complement DVD releases where gender and sexuality were central (Tasker); presented at, and developed projects with, the Women's Institute around gender and the media (Cornea, Williams); and participated in public debates in conjunction with the London Feminist Network (Atakav, Williams). Many staff also have their own blogs.

Other engagement activities emerge from unit research clusters around genre boundaries and reception, notably staff contributions to events at local cinemas, film festivals and the popular press (Cornea, Jancovich, Krämer, Mills, Tasker). Although these engagement activities are not a source of impact in and of themselves, the unit's approach to impact considers that many of its impact narratives have necessarily emerged out of the range of engagement activity undertaken during the assessment period.

Staff are supported on engagement or impact projects through local and institutional structures. The unit offers funds to help develop impact activity (for example, the unit funded a conference that brought academics together with those working the film exhibition industry, an event that led to a number of on-going collaborations). Staff regularly meet with the unit research director to identify long-term individual and collaborative research goals, and are supported in their activities by the Faculty Research Enterprise Team who have expertise on all aspects of research grants, project implementation and evidence-gathering.

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c. Strategy and plans

The unit intends to increase financial and time-based support for impact over the next five years, at both internal and institutional levels. The unit sees the development of a community of practice around shared engagement and impact experiences as an essential step in achieving deeper impact from existing relationships, and creating new ones. Learning from colleagues and external sources with practical knowledge will augment institutional training.

While unit strategy has been to enhance existing relationships and build out from engagement activity, our future plans call for a more holistic approach to impact that will be achieved through:

- The continuation of the unit's current Impact Working Group to raise awareness of impact activity among staff, and run unit-specific training on impact in the wider research context
- The identification of staff within unit research clusters, with impact 'ambassadors' (or experts) within each cluster who can support staff in initiating and developing impact case studies
- The creation of an impact and engagement director within the unit as a central point of contact for queries and the discussion of future plans (this role to sit alongside the existing structures of the mentor programme, research director meetings, and the institutional appraisal system)
- The establishment of an Impact Fund (within the existing Supplementary Research Fund), to which staff can apply for support for trial engagement and impact activities
- The development of a regular research seminar slot (for staff and postgraduate students) that engages with academic and industry speakers who can relate their experience of developing and designing impact case studies
- The promotion of institutional training sessions (through the Faculty, and the Centre for Staff and Educational Development) which focus on how impact can be effectively built into research planning, grant development and applications
- Enhanced media training to encourage staff to engage and interact with national broadcasters, media companies and related agencies. While the unit acknowledges that these appearances alone are not enough to claim impact, they will create additional opportunities for staff to explore impact opportunities (for example, after a media appearance about the horror film, Jancovich was contacted by a video production company that produces materials for schools: that contact led to him appearing in one production, working as a regular consultant, and then including other unit members)
- The prioritising of impact within unit appointment selection strategy and promotional criteria
- An increased focus on impact and engagement within institutional study leave and research sabbaticals to place such activities on the same scale as traditional research activity
- The increased involvement of all unit staff in existing local and regional industry and community-based media (Norwich Sound and Vision Festival, Film Club, CinemaPlus)
- Increased support from institutional structures such as the Press Office, including more focused use of social media.

d. Relationship to case studies

The case studies arise from the unit's focus on the circuit of popular media activity from production to reception, the exploration of historical change, and the dynamic social and cultural nature of media texts. These speak directly to research interests in British cinema, and local and regional media, and demonstrate expansion from engagement-based opportunities, as outlined above.

Case study 1 ('Preserving and Presenting the Region Through Media') demonstrates how the unit's research within media geography, social capital and regional identity has strategically informed the policy of the East Anglian Film Archive (EAFA). Recent cataloguing and preservation has increased access and cultural awareness of EAFA and its role as a central repository of media imagery from the region.

Case study 2 ('Influencing DVD Release Strategies (British Film)') details one of the unit's industrial partnerships. Arising out of existing engagement activities linked to wider unit research experience within British cinema, the case study demonstrates how Johnston and Williams' research reputation and knowledge functioned as a crucial link between the unit and the commercial interests and release strategy of two DVD production companies.