

Institution:	University of Northumbria at Newcastle
Unit of Assessment:	36A - Communication, Cultural and Media Studies
<p>a. Context</p> <p>The key non-academic user groups, beneficiaries and audiences for Communication, Cultural and Media Studies (CCMS) research are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural organisations, including international and national film festivals, cinemas, festivals and societies devoted to comics and graphic novels. Also the audiences for these venues and events. • Educational organisations, particularly those involved in the development of syllabi and curricula and teaching materials. These range from international bodies (for example, UNESCO) to nationally-based organisations (including the National Association for the Teaching of English and the National Literacy Trust). Other beneficiaries include museums, colleges and schools, and managers, teachers and pupils within these organisations. • Governmental organisations and charities, both in the United Kingdom and abroad, whose activities involve cultural policy, management of cultural resources, and the development of communication strategies. <p>The main impact types are varied and operate at different levels within organisations. They are: influencing the design and delivery of curricula and syllabi in schools and colleges; contributing to personal and professional development; contributing to the development of equal opportunity and diversity policies; contributing to the wider public understanding of cultural history; enhancing the sustainability of cultural events and venues through the provision of educational elements; providing expert advice to governmental bodies, NGOs, civil and political organisations and charities, thereby influencing policy.</p> <p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>CCMS research ranges from cultural-historical work on cinema, television and comics to more social sciences-orientated research into media institutions and practices. Given the different kinds of user relationships that can develop out of this breadth of activity, no one type of impact has been pursued or prioritised over others. Instead, our approach throughout the REF period has been to plan impact as a key objective into all research projects. This planning of impact into the design of research projects, the building of relationships with external research users, and energetic dissemination of research to appropriate external audiences, have combined to underpin our approach to research impact.</p> <p>Impact has largely been facilitated through direct engagement with user groups over sometimes lengthy periods. These engagements are diverse and are based on the recognised expertise and networks of individual researchers. An example drawn from the range of CCMS activity is Gibson's provision of training on working with graphic novels and comics to librarians and teachers at schools, colleges and libraries as well as her training of the judging panel for the Carnegie and Greenaway awards for children's literature in 2009. She has also developed teaching materials and advised on policy for Education Scotland, the National Association for the Teaching of English (2007-2013), National Literacy Trust (2009-2011), Booktrust (2009-2013) and Seven Stories: the National Centre for Children's Books (2011-13). Shaw, who researches human rights journalism, was an expert reviewer of UNESCO's Model Curricula for Journalism Education and has subsequently developed new material for this project, which has so far been adopted by 63 journalism schools in 51 developing countries. Early Career Researcher Jones, who alongside his work on cinema has researched online sexualities, has influenced healthcare policies through his participation in 2012 in the lottery-funded symposium 'Porn Laid Bare', which was organised by the Terence Higgins Trust in association with the University of Sussex, and the findings of which will feed directly into the Terence Higgins Trust's policies, although the full extent of this impact will not be evident until after the census period.</p> <p>Another important pathway to impact has been the effective dissemination of research to non-</p>	

academic users. An example of this approach was a symposium on 'Catherine Cookson Country' held at Northumbria University in 2012 which brought together researchers with residents from South Tyneside in what was initially intended as a simple dissemination event but which led to a productive engagement with South Tyneside Council's local history programme. CCMS researchers, especially those working in the area of film/television and cultural histories, have regularly delivered research-based presentations at regional and national venues – including cinemas, museums and festivals – and these have helped to establish relationships with users which have underpinned much of the impact activity which has occurred during the census period and have the potential for producing quantifiable impact in the future. This is most evident in the work undertaken at the Abertoir film festival where engagement with organisers led to growing impact over several years. To this end, staff have made full use of the services of the University's Press and Marketing Office in disseminating research findings, and a number of staff feature on the University's list of experts available for press comments in their areas of expertise.

In active support of this work, we have incorporated impact as an integral aspect of CCMS research planning. The Personal Research and Innovation Plan completed by all academic staff on an annual basis includes impact, ensuring that impact is understood to be a core objective of research, and enabling the identification of specific requirements for support in this area. Impact activity is included in staff workloads, and research sabbaticals have featured impact-related objectives: for example, both Hunter and Sexton undertook impact activity relating to the Fantasy Film Festival case study during their sabbatical leave. This approach has also benefited from the input of two Senior Research Assistants who have each received UKCGE and research council training in effecting research impact, and who, while not based in CCMS, have worked with our researchers in developing an understanding of impact throughout the latter part of the REF period. This has been complemented by university training on public engagement and impact aligned with the Vitae Researcher Development Framework.

Our overall approach to impact has been co-ordinated by a senior CCMS researcher, who has oversight of individual research workload plans as they relate to impact and also administers financial support in this area. CCMS researchers have additionally received financial support for impact work from a public engagement and impact fund managed by the University's Research and Business Services.

c. Strategy and plans

Our strategy for impact recognises that much of our impact to date has been underpinned by excellent working relationships with organisations, both regional and national. These will continue to be supported and developed beyond the original organisations into broader networks and/or associations. For example, our work with the 'Abertoir' and 'Offscreen' festivals is a platform for developing broader connections with the European Fantastic Films Festival Federation, to which both festivals are affiliated. Some of the new relationships have arisen directly from the professional activities of individual staff, including recently-appointed staff who bring extensive experience of engagement into CCMS. For example, Shaw's appointment to the post of Secretary General of the International Peace Research Association in 2012 has provided an international forum to which his research can contribute to developing strategies for conflict prevention and resolution, while Ross's work with the Welsh Assembly and the New Zealand Labour Party on improving communication strategies has established a focus for further engagements with state and political user groups that has the potential to extend the reach of CCMS-based impact.

Other relationships relevant to impact are being developed under the auspices of Northumbria's regional engagement and partnership activity. This has already involved building impact activity into relationships with external organisations that were originally developed for other purposes. An example of this is the University's regional partnership with the BBC which has recently incorporated an evaluation of the future of children's TV programme-making in the North that will involve Peirse, who has published research on children's television. A recently developed regional partnership with Newcastle's Tyneside Cinema provides another opportunity for impact around fantasy-based and cult film genres and it builds upon informal relationships with this particular cinema developed by staff over several years.

Another of our aims is to develop the impact of research by colleagues based in media and

journalism practice through mentoring and focused support as a way of extending and maturing the CCMS research base and range of expertise. This has implications for our approach to impact given that these individuals have strong professional connections with a range of media organisations – including newspapers and press associations, film and television production companies, and professional unions such as the Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union. These connections align with CCMS research and impact strategies as an integral aspect of the growth of this activity. In addition, an important feature of our current and future research strategy is increasing the number of external organisations with which we are developing collaborative research funding bids. For example, Sexton's AHRC-funded network, awarded in December 2012, involves both the Offscreen film festival and Newcastle's Star and Shadow cinema (an independent non-profit cinema). Our other partnerships provide frameworks for engagement with funding bodies as well as mechanisms to deliver collaborative projects as a way of ensuring the longer-term sustainability and development of our impact activity.

d. Relationship to case studies

Our two impact case studies are:

- Developing the profile of women at the Thought Bubble Comics Festival;
- Developing the education profile of genre film festivals.

The development of impact activity in both of these case studies has benefited from our proactive approach to impact in terms of research and workload planning and in particular the recognition that impact timeframes can vary significantly from one area and one project to another.

Relationships with the Thought Bubble festival and genre film festivals were both nurtured over several years and were based on a lengthy series of research publications. Impact activity occurred early on in the relationship with Thought Bubble and has taken different forms, while impact on film festivals has been a more recent development arising from a focused engagement between a team of CCMS researchers and festival organizers. We did not prioritise one form of impact over another, and the support mechanisms were the same. Funding and workload requirements were assessed for each impact activity by the Unit's Impact Champion, and further input was provided by the University's Research and Business Services and by Senior Research Assistants explicitly committed to the support of impact activity. The impact activity presented in our case studies will continue and develop further beyond the REF period, reflecting our belief that the maturing of relationships with external organizations is a vital part of our forward planning for impact.

While impact deriving from formal partnerships with non-academic organisations will become an even more prominent feature of our approach in the future, the sustainability of our impact will entail a commitment to supporting different kinds of impact. These will incorporate nurturing and developing the kinds of links between initial research and impact which are evident in the film festivals and Thought Bubble Case Studies. In this sense, our two case studies seen together emphasise a flexible approach to impact founded on the diversity of CCMS research and the different kinds of collaborations and indeed impacts that arise from such an approach.