

Impact template (REF3a)

<p>Institution: University of Leeds</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: UoA36 Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management</p>
<p>a. Context ICS research impacts upon <u>media production</u> (modes and techniques of representing social reality in ways that are accessible, fair and accountable); <u>media consumption</u> (the practices, concerns and responses of media audiences as both citizens and consumers); and <u>communication policy</u> (relating to media and other creative processes). Principal targets of relationship-building and effective impact for us are <u>the media industries</u>, <u>government</u> (national, local and supranational) and <u>communities</u> (place-based and of practice). Making research relevant to these three targets entails a sensitive balance between constructive support and independent critical distance. A key aim of the Institute's interdisciplinary research groups (Political Communication, Cultural Production and Policy, International Communication, Journalism Studies, and Visual and Digital Cultures) is to provide supportive environments in which collaborative approaches to these areas of impact can be nurtured, often in settings outside the University where researchers can come to understand the needs and pressures of practitioners, audiences and citizens, while seeking to impress upon them the value of theoretical and empirical insights emanating from the research process.</p>
<p>b. Approach to impact In this section we consider a) how researchers in ICS have interacted with non-academic users, beneficiaries and audiences; b) the nature of some of these relationships and the impact that has resulted from them; c) how ICS has supported staff in realising such impact; and d) how ICS has made use of institutional facilities, expertise and resources in undertaking these activities.</p> <p><i>A) Building relationships</i> A key to effective research impact is that projects are designed in collaboration with potential users, beneficiaries and audiences from beyond the academy. Excellent examples of such design include the Leeds Media Ecology research project (Coleman, Moss, Parry, Thumim, Stamper and Blumler) which has worked with over 40 news producers in Leeds (from the BBC and Yorkshire Post to bloggers and community radio stations) with a view to mapping the circulation of news within the city and exploring how different media provide specific parts of the local story. Oakley and Hesmondhalgh's research on working conditions in the cultural industries has led them to work with unions, policy-makers and activist groups, and their AHRC-funded project on Cultural Policy Under New Labour is working with an advisory group including former special advisers to Secretaries of State and leading cultural practitioners. Moss, Kennedy, Firmstone, Coleman, Parry, Thornham and Thumim's project within the EPSRC-funded Communities and Culture Network Plus has involved a partnership with Leeds City Council to design and inform its new public communications strategy. Macdonald has established the Screenwriting Research Network, which involves both practitioners and academics in reflecting upon this aspect of cultural production. Researchers working on media and cultural policy have formed a range of networks with key policy-makers. Coleman has given evidence to several UK Parliamentary select committees and Hesmondhalgh to the European Parliament. Oakley is a member of the Mayor of London's Cultural Reference Group. Visiting Professor Sylvia Harvey's ongoing contributions to media policy debates within the Voice of the Listener and Viewer have brought together government, media industry and civic actors in a uniquely influential coalition. Voltmer was invited by the World Bank to help inform its five-year Communication for Governance and Accountability Program. Coleman has worked with the Rand Corporation to devise a ten-year foresight policy on patterns of Internet use for the European Commission. Aiello has worked with the LGBTQ community as consultant to the EU-funded <i>Europe of minorities: Putting to use the European Courts' human rights case law on LGBT people and migrants</i> project). This is far from being an exhaustive list, but gives a flavour of the ways in which research conducted within ICS is geared towards co-productive relationships with media users, beneficiaries and audiences.</p> <p><i>B) Realising impact</i> The aim of the relationships outlined in the previous section has been to make non-academic users, beneficiaries and audiences aware of the social relevance of research conducted in ICS with a view to making an impact upon media and cultural policy, production and reception. For example, when researchers from the ESRC-funded <i>Communicating Copyright</i></p>

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project (**Klein, Moss, Lee and Edwards**) launched their findings in London, the Shadow Secretary of State for Media, Culture & Sport stated that this persuaded her to run a consultation with young people to learn more about their attitudes to copyright. **Thornham** has worked with the BBC's *Blast* project to devise online learning resources for young people and John Millner, Executive Producer at BBC Learning has stated that her research 'really increased the extent to which people working in Learning think about what they're doing because, as in most bits in the BBC, people in Learning didn't really think very deeply, and certainly not on a theoretical level, about what they were trying to do when they set out to do it'. **Coleman** and **Blumler's** research on the 2010 televised election debates have informed preparations for the next round of election debates and both researchers have been invited to join broadcasters and political parties in informal planning talks. In addition to these examples of conventionally-published research influencing media and cultural practice, ICS has promoted imaginative routes to social impact that go beyond the traditional researcher-practitioner relationship. For example, based on **Coleman's** interviews with voters about their memories and experiences of voting (conducted as part of the AHRC-funded 'Road to Voting' project), the Arts Council of England funded the West Yorkshire Playhouse and Roundhouse, London's staging of the play *Counted*, the first ever piece of verbatim theatre to construct a script from academic interview data. **Popple's** research project on media representations of the 1984-5 Miners' Strike brought together miners, journalists and police to think about how future conflicts of this kind might be mediated differently. Such attempts to generate public discussion and influence institutional policy and practice in response to research insights that might otherwise have been confined to the academy are central to the Institute's objective to produce research that makes a difference.

C) Structures of support for research impact. Reflection on the impact of our research is embedded within the Institute's management structure, including regular discussions in our Research Committee, Institute management team, monthly staff meetings, training sessions and away days. Research mentors work with staff to ensure that planned and ongoing projects connect at the earliest stage with target communities and audiences. This is supported by an annual Research Needs Analysis (RNA) process, in which all staff complete an account of their previous year's research and their plans for the coming year. Reflection on potential and realised research impact is now incorporated within the RNA process, allowing for ongoing monitoring of the social ramifications and potentialities of our work. In addition to this annual monitoring process, at the outset of all newly-generated research projects, there is peer review of planned impact. Seed funding for building research-impact relationships with external partners is offered by the Research Committee.

D) Institutional support ICS benefits from the HEIF V Creative and Cultural Industries Exchange (CCIE) research hub, which, with a budget of £708,000 over four years (2011-15), sits across two faculties- Arts and Performance, Visual Arts and Communications – and is responsible for the facilitation of collaborative external research, development of impact training and commercialisation and distribution of seed funding. In the most recent round (2012) of HEIF V funding, ICS was awarded resources enabling it to establish the Improving Working Life in the Cultural Industries network (**Hesmondhalgh** and **Oakley**) and a collaboration with external web designers to create an archive app that can be used by members of the public to adapt and re-mix media content (Popple). ICS is a key player in the University-funded Culture, Society and Innovation research hub, through which our Transformation Fellow (**Thornham**) is funded, providing us with access to a range of external partnerships and research collaborators. ICS is engaged with the HEIF-funded Ignite scheme which supports the development of impact-based relationships with external partners.

c. Strategy and plans

Our impact strategy is based on the following five principles: i) effective impact addresses publics across geographies, ranging from immediate campus neighbours in the city of Leeds, Yorkshire and the region, the UK, the EU and other international spaces; ii) effective impact involves individuals, groups, and institutions from everyday life, as well as those making policy and funding decisions; iii) potential users of research will be substantially and meaningfully involved in research projects from the outset; iv) under-represented communities and audiences will be identified and efforts made to link our research to their needs; v) a range of evaluative criteria will be developed and applied to the impact of our research.

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In pursuing these principles, the Institute has adopted a strategy intended to place an increasing focus on transforming our approach to impact from an often secondary activity to a clearly targeted and embedded practice. This strategy entails i) developing cross-disciplinary collaborative research likely to result in positive social impact; for example, Coleman's work with a theatre company to produce a verbatim play based on his interviews with voters, and Popple's work with Opera North; ii) developing relationships and consulting with non-academic partners and audiences, such as Popple's work with the BBC, Coleman, Firmstone, Kennedy and Moss's work with Leeds City Council and Oakley and Hesmondhalgh's work with trade unions; iii) building potential for impact into research projects from the initial planning stage, as in the case of the Leeds media ecology project, which involved representatives from several levels of local media from the outset; iv) maximising our funding through effective responses to RCUK requirements v) developing focussed impact training for staff and research students, such as by pairing new staff with experienced and well-networked researchers; vi) embedding impact within the curriculum, including specific teaching about approaches to impact in our undergraduate and postgraduate methods' classes; vii) identifying and targeting underrepresented populations, audiences and institutions, as in Kennedy's research involving people with intellectual disabilities, Klein's work on representations of stigmatised groups in television entertainment formats and Aiello's work on the politics of visibility, responsibility, and accountability for different LGBTQ subjects.

d. Relationship to case studies

We began by stating that the principal targets of our research are the media industries, government and communities. Our three case studies illustrate how such connections are made. **Case Study 1 – Kennedy's** research on including people with intellectual disabilities in the worldwide web linked ICS research to a key part of the media industries and an easily forgotten community of media users. It combined the Institute's research strengths in visual and digital culture with the strong links we have now developed with the web design industry. The project was predicated on the identification and dissemination of good practice within the web design industry. It has led ICS to think strategically about tracking the long-term impact of such research, as that was not built into the original project plan. While impact was assessed six months after participation in INMD workshops, longer-term impact measurement would tell us more about the outcomes of this research. The need for such long-term evaluation has made us more aware of the need to plan to track impact when designing future projects. **Case Study 2 – Popple's *Helping BBC Archives Develop Democratic Public Engagement*** - has contributed to policy change regarding access to archival resources and the development of participatory dialogues with BBC licence payers through the production of user generated content. The project exemplifies our developing relationships with Britain's main public service broadcasters and the communities to which they should be accountable. **Case Study 3, Coleman's *Youth Amplified*** project, set out to enhance the capacity of 11-18 year-olds to engage in civic and political life. By working with local government bodies, such as the Leeds Youth Council and the Leeds Children in Care Board, as well as schools, youth centres, youth offender institutions and independent youth communities, the research has led ICS to reflect upon the practical challenges surrounding sometimes abstractly-employed terms such as 'civic participation' and 'youth engagement'. By engaging directly with cultural and pedagogical barriers to equal and inclusive voice, ICS research has come into close contact with policies and practices around education, youth work and local representation - areas not commonly associated with studies of political communication.