

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: University of Ulster
Unit of Assessment: 36 Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management
Title of case study: Supporting Digital Media and the Creative Industries
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Research from the Digital arts strand of the CMR has had an impact in two related areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It has fed into and impacted on policy and planning for the development of the creative industries in Northern Ireland • It has helped cultural institutions and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) to develop mobile phone apps and interactive gaming solutions to the problems of maximising audience participation and increasing footfall across key cultural sectors.
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Policy and Planning</p> <p>In RAE 2001, we highlighted our research interest in the cultural and economic impact of new digital technologies through the pioneering work of colleague, Dan Fleming. In 2004, this interest in the digital arts was cemented into the Centre for Media Research (CMR) structure as one of five strands and Ned Rossiter and Helen Jackson picked up on Fleming's pioneering work. Colm Murphy looked at policy issues to do with digital technologies and his chapter 'The Cultural Economy of Dublin' (2002) looked at eight digital media companies, outlining the implications for a digital media strategy. The key text underpinning this research round is Murphy's <i>Policymaking for Digital Media Growth</i> (2012), which explored the experience of the Republic of Ireland in the early 2000s to make recommendations for digital growth today. The result of this tradition of cutting-edge research is that the unit has been able to impact on digital media policy in a significant way.</p> <p>Digital Apps and Gaming</p> <p>The application of digital technologies to new cultural aims has again been a long interest of the unit's researchers and especially in their potential as games for educational and cultural purposes (see Fleming, Dan, 1996, <i>Powerplay: Toys as Popular Culture</i>). More recently, Helen Jackson developed two pieces of artwork which explored the creative possibilities of digital technologies and which provided the model for developing locative media apps in this research round. <i>God's Script</i> (2005) was a multi-linear narrative and hypertext adaptation of a Borges essay and <i>Isolation</i> (2004) was an interactive, multimedia digital art installation designed to generate an immersive experience for the viewer (both submitted to the RAE 2008). The experience informed her locative media apps developed for the tourism industry in this research round.</p> <p>Alan Hook (who arrived in 2009), working with PhD research student, Oonagh Murphy has explored digital innovation in the UK Museum sector, applying previous theoretical findings to exploring ways of increasing awareness of what museums have to offer the public, especially through the application of on-line gaming and virtual reality games.</p>
<p>3. References to the research</p> <p><i>The following underpinning research was entered for RAE 2008 in which the Unit's research was rated as 95% 2* or better.</i></p> <p>Murphy, Colm (2002) 'The Cultural Economy of Dublin' in Mary P Corcoran and Michael Peillon (eds) <i>Ireland Unbound</i> (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration)</p> <p>Jackson, Helen (2005) <i>God's Script</i></p> <p>Jackson, Helen (2004) <i>Isolation</i></p> <p>Rossiter, Ned (2006) <i>Organized Networks: Media Theory, Creative Labour, New Institutions</i> (Amsterdam: Netherlands Architectural Institute)</p>

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Fleming, Dan (1996) *Powerplay: Toys as Popular Culture* (Manchester, Manchester University Press) (RAE 2001, unit rated 4).

Murphy, Colm (2012) *Policymaking for Digital Media Growth* (Dublin: Faculty Global) (see REF 2)

Jackson, H. (2009) 'Knowing Photography Now: the knowledge economy of photography in the twenty-first century', *Photographies Journal* (Special Issue on Photography and Education), Vol 2, No. 2, pp169 – 183 (see REF 2)

4. Details of the impact

Policy and Planning

1. Influencing InvestNI Digital Content Strategy

In 2008, **Colm Murphy** was asked to make a presentation to Northern Ireland's economic development agency, InvestNI and to review their draft Digital Content Strategy. Central to his submission was the argument that a successful strategy should be based on intellectual property targets, rather than simply job targets. This was accepted in the InvestNI report, *Digital Contents Strategy for Northern Ireland* subsequently published in 2008. The impact of the submission can be seen in that the first draft of this report was still based on job creation targets but the final report was amended in line with Murphy's suggestion.

2. Maximising the Potential of the Creative Industries in Northern Ireland – CMR Public Policy Paper No. 7:

The Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee of the Northern Ireland Executive set up an inquiry on Maximising the Potential of the Creative Industries and Murphy wrote a paper for the inquiry (subsequently published as a CMR Policy Document). Murphy was then invited to make two further (oral) submissions to the Inquiry on policies for digital media development in other countries (these oral submissions can be found in the Hansard transcript of the Inquiry proceedings). This report *Maximising the Potential of the Creative Industries* draws extensively on the CMR submission (paragraph 34, page 14; paragraph 44, page 16; paragraph 98, page 26, *passim*). The Report acknowledges the impact that Media Studies research has had: *'The Committee noted examples provided during the course of the Inquiry, which suggested a degree of successful collaboration and co-ordination between the industry and aspects of academia. The Committee noted that this may be in part due to the efforts of the University of Ulster ...'*

3. £3.6m INTERREG EU Creative Futures programme – 2013-2015

The tender for this project, led by **Murphy** and **Sarah Edge**, was won based on existing research conducted by CMR staff on how to develop digital creative industries and on knowledge gleaned from research on what has worked in other jurisdictions. The Project, now called 'Honeycomb Creative Works' was launched in September 2013 and is, therefore an 'impact' project already, designed to take research already disseminated into the stage of skills development and acquisition. The Special EU Programmes Body noted in welcoming the initiative, "This is a truly innovative initiative which will build upon the wealth of natural home-grown talent and expertise that exists within the region's creative industries sector. It will help generate new employment opportunities, safeguard existing businesses in the digital content marketplace and encourage strong economic links, on a cross-border basis."

4. Digital Causeway Strategy 2008

The CMR/School of Media, working with the University's School of Computing, has helped Coleraine Borough Council formulate a Digital Causeway strategy and marketing plan for foreign direct investment. As a result Coleraine is being marketed internationally by InvestNI as a hub for cloud computing and media-related digital investments. This is on target to generate over £20m in new high tech inward investment into Coleraine in 2014.

<http://www.digitalcauseway.com/>

- **Digital Apps and Gaming**

1. History Space and **Titanic Rediscovered** are two mobile application research outputs that have been developed by **Helen Jackson** from her earlier explorations of the potential of location-

based and augmented reality technologies to provide innovations in interpretation. These augmented reality methods have had a significant impact on both tourism stakeholders and creative media industries nationally and offer substantial opportunities for international applications.

(a) The NITB is currently seeking to license the technology system developed by the CMR for the History Space project. The license will be to support the delivery of an NITB/HBO **Game of Thrones** location-based mobile application, emphasizing the considerable *international* potential of the software.

(b) **History Space** and **Titanic Rediscovered** have also informed digital strategies in *local government* agencies. The **Mourne Heritage Trust** in conjunction with **Newry and Mourne Council**, have used these mobile applications to inform digital interpretation policy at local council level. Specifically, the software has directed the interpretive technology for one of their key heritage centres, the **Annalong Cornmill**.

2. **MYNI** is a game designed by **Alan Hook** and commissioned for the NITB (available at www.myni2013.com). It was designed to promote civic pride and internal tourism while exploring new crowdsourcing models of data and asset acquisition for companies. The impacts were significant. During the game's first run, from 28th March to 9th May 2013, over **1800 players** completed photography-based tasks providing valuable data for the Tourist Board as well as providing over **1700 photographs** that are now owned by the Board. These will be used for both print and web advertising with a projected value in excess of **£51,000**. The game obtained good media coverage with the website, at its peak, seeing traffic of **2915 visitors**, sending **23,000 page views** in 24 hours and over **17,000 site visits** over the duration of the project, a significant increase in public engagement.

3. **Alan Hook** developed a series of collaborations with a range of cultural organisations to promote engagement with the arts among the general public, constructing a body of work that has had substantial cultural and economic impact. This body of work is made up of the pieces *The Foursquare Mayor Chair*, with its 3 installations in The Void Gallery, The Crescent Arts Centre and The Queens Film Theatre; the Hackday *This is Our Playground*, the conference presentation *This is Our Playground: Recognising Students as Innovators*, and the symposium *Engaging Visitors Through Play*. The whole is an ongoing mix of action research and practice-driven investigation in innovation in the Museums and Galleries sector.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Social and Digital Marketing Officer, Northern Irish Tourist Board (**ID3**)

Invest Northern Ireland

http://www.investni.com/digital_content_strategy_northern_ireland_2008.pdf

Head of Economic Development, Derry City Council (**ID5**).

<http://www.digitalcauseway.com/>

Social and Digital Marketing Manager, Northern Ireland Tourist Board

Tourist Development Officer | Newry & Mourne District Council (**ID1**)

Director, Big Motive (**ID2**)

Director, Special EU programmes Body (SEUPB)

Inquiry on Maximising the Potential of the Creative Industries:

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Committees/Culture-Arts-and-Leisure/Reports/Inquiry-on-Maximising-the-Potential-of-the-Creative-Industries/>

Social Editor, AV Browne Group (**ID4**)