

**Institution: Aberystwyth University**

**Unit of Assessment: D36 Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management**

**a. Overview**

The Department of Information Studies (DIS) has a proven international reputation for research in library and information studies, archives and records management. The Department's research activity primarily focuses on issues relating to the ability of individuals, organisations, and societies to obtain, manage, organise and retrieve information and knowledge in an increasingly complex and diverse Digital Age. Departmental research addresses issues of intellectual property, cultural memory and identity, digital innovation and developments, and communication and creativity in a digital age.

The Department is also establishing an international reputation for research in information policy practice and theory for the cultural and heritage, commercial, government and security sectors. Staff are also developing research in growth areas spanning digital curation, information assurance, cyber-security and information behaviour and digital and social interactivity, which complements the Department's work in knowledge, information management and in archives, heritage and museums.

Staff of the Department have excellent relationships with the wider information profession, and their engagement with professional practice is demonstrated by their participation and collaboration in the organization of professional conferences, seminars and workshops, delivering key note papers and/or invited presentations in relation to their research.

**b. Research strategy**

The Department carries out research across the broad spectrum of library and information studies, archives and records management. These are studied in the context of practical applications in library and information studies, archives and records management and knowledge and information management.

Within this broad spectrum the Department has a number of specialisms or research priority areas which focus on research in relation to –

1. Knowledge and Information Management;
2. Information Organization;
3. Social, Behavioural and Cultural aspects of Information.

In these priority areas staff have research interests in (1) the general philosophical underpinnings of knowledge management (Broady-Preston), theoretical and practical aspects of knowledge management (Broady-Preston, Ellis), and communities of practice (Ellis); (2) the Semantic Web and folksonomy and Genre Theory (Rafferty), archival theory (Mathias), records management, digitisation and cloud computing (Higgins); (3) modelling information behaviour and academic communication (Ellis, Foster), information behaviour on the internet (Ellis). There is naturally crossover between these areas in terms of research: there are interconnections between knowledge and information management, information organization, and social, behavioural and cultural aspects of information and policy research across these areas continues to be significant particularly in the health and education sectors (Preston).

The Department's research strategy has five main objectives which are to –

1. ensure output of high quality publications;
2. support high quality bids for research income;
3. develop opportunities for collaborative research with other organisations, including higher education institutions;
4. develop policy research to support evidence-based policy making and practice;
5. continue to pursue other sources of research income and to diversify support for research students.

The success of the first of these objectives is evidenced in high quality publications in international peer reviewed journals, conferences and edited works. The success of the second and third objectives are evidenced in the research collaboration and research income which has been generated in association with the National Library of Wales and with CyMal. The third and fourth objectives have been pursued in collaboration with the National Library of Wales, Bangor University and the Chief Information Officer for Wales in the exploration of the *Definitions of privacy: a digital agenda for Wales*. Success in relation to the fourth objective is evident in the impact case studies of research for information professional development and digital records management. Finally, the fifth objective has been pursued in relation to the number of international research students supported by a variety of governmental and non-governmental organizations, nationally in a consortium with several higher education and national memory institutions.

The Department has a Departmental Director of Research, the roles and remit of this post are outlined at <http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/research/contact/ddr/>. The Head of Department and Director of Research, advised by the Departmental Research Committee, are responsible for the overall research strategy. For the future, nurturing and growing the staff will be essential to fully realise the potential of the intellectual capital held by them. Annual Staff Development Performance Reviews will identify opportunities for research as well as highlighting progress and goal attainment and possible sabbaticals and workload adjustments.

### **Research Impact, Research Activity and Sustainability**

Priority areas for research will continue to receive maximum support. This underpins the existing research strengths of the Department both in terms of academic expertise and infrastructure. The research activities of the Department have developed in these areas for many years and have been reinforced both in terms of academic appointments and research and computing and library infrastructure. Impact is a key issue for research and Department Research Committee will advise on this, academics will propose leads, but priorities will be decided by the Head of Department with a view to five year goals. Research activity continues to be at a continuing high level and the sustainability of research is demonstrated both by the Department's investment in research and the newly created Institute of Management, Law and Information Science's investment in research infrastructure in Departments and across the Institute.

The co-location of the Departments in the redeveloped campus within the Institute structure provides opportunities for development both within and between the constituent departments in the professional concourse. The enhanced facilities for research in the new Institute environment include dedicated meeting and research areas, a continued dedicate library on-site library service and networked computing and information services to support research activity across the Departments in the Institute. This includes the provision of specific facilities and support for research students who will have dedicated computing and library support within the Institute and campus. The University's investment in

the campus and in the constituent Departments signals a continuing commitment to research activity and sustainability of research in information studies.

### **Interactions and Interdisciplinarity**

The Department's research will continue to be encouraged across disciplinary boundaries, and will draw together our base in the social sciences with (applied and theoretical) sciences and the arts and international partners, we are actively seeking new collaborations and partners for research. Travel to meetings, to conferences, and encouragement of outside connections to support the development and continuation of research relationships will be supported including where speculative investment is necessary. The department has been well placed for visitors from other universities worldwide and this pattern will continue and be enhanced with visiting scholar invitations, further series of AIRS seminars, symposiums and guest speakers. We will also be running an Interdisciplinary Cyber Defence Competition (CDC) which will be significant for the Department's research profile, grant applications and research impact.

The CDC will be funded initially through small scale seed funding to create a proof of concept, thereafter our engagement with RCUK and other funding bodies including government agencies will be approached. The CDC will in the pilot phase meet the needs of local organisations, and in the main phase involve teams drawn from companies, government agencies and groups of information system and network specialists wishing to extend their skill base and enhance the protection they offer to their organisations. The CDC is being organised by the Department of Information Studies in conjunction with the Department of International Politics with technical support from Information Services and consultant technical support.

### **c. People, including:**

#### **i. Staffing strategy and staff development**

Since the last Research Assessment Exercise there have been significant changes in the staff research establishment. Many of the most senior research active members of staff have retired and their replacements have been staff at the beginning of their research careers. This has provided opportunities for re-structuring and re-engaging the research direction of the Department and led to the Department focussing on the research areas identified above in relation to the subject areas of library and information studies and archives and records management. The appointment of staff in the subject areas of archives, records management and information governance has further strengthened the Department especially in relation to e-governance and cyber-security. Internally the Department has a policy of providing for light semesters in which staff can focus on research as well as a Departmental and University policy of providing research days and research leave to develop research ideas and proposals as well as supporting on-going research activities. Staff are fully informed of new research calls from the Research Councils, in particular the ESRC and AHRC, and other research funding bodies, as well as providing information on opportunities for the support of early career researchers. Commitment to equal opportunities is evidenced in the gender and age balance in the Department and the equal opportunities in terms of promotion which reflects this balance exactly.

### **Research Monitoring and Performance Review**

All staff take part in the University and Department's Staff Development and Performance Review Scheme. This takes place annually and provides the opportunity for staff to reflect on their objectives and activities in the previous year and plan for the coming year. This exercise can be seen in part as

monitoring and in part mentoring. The aims and objectives are assessed according to the relevant expectations and stage of career of staff involved, with different expectations for early career and established researchers.

## **ii. Research students**

Doctoral research is central to the University and Departmental mission, with c. 30-40 Postgraduate Research students registered for MPhil/PhD in the department at any time. DIS is recognised by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) for Block Grant Partnership awards for postgraduate research and training; and submission rates are well in excess of those required to retain Research Council recognition. The Department offers the full range of facilities to support MPhil/PhD students: with dedicated office space and access to central resources, including full computing and information services. All /PhD students are required to take research training modules, organised centrally by the Office of Postgraduate Studies. These modules combine generic research training modules with subject specific research training modules provided by the Department in both full time and distance learning mode. This allows for the creation of packages of research training geared to the specific needs of the individual student. This is in addition to the individual research supervision where students are allocated two supervisors from within the Department. A range of grants and awards is available to EU and International prospective students, to support doctoral research. Aberystwyth University is also recognised by the US Department of Education as a Foreign School, holding a Title IV Agreement. The Department has been successful in attracting research funding for students from the AHRC, the University of Wales Research Studentship, and for Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarships (KESS) awards.

## **Recruitment and Equal Opportunities**

Research student recruitment has been steady with numbers of research students nationally and internationally being maintained. The number of successful completions has been matched by new registrations, nationally and internationally, in roughly equal numbers and with a mixed balance in terms of age, gender and ethnicity. The Department remains one of the few providers of postgraduate research training in the UK and the demand in terms of applications continues to be high.

## **Monitoring**

All research students are assigned two supervisors who meet with students at regular intervals, in the case of international research students resident in the UK these meetings take place at least once a month in line with UK Border Agency guidelines. Research students who are studying part-time or at a distance have the equivalent in e-supervisions. Research students complete a Research Training Compact which incorporates a Continuing Professional Development Assessment identifying their training needs for the year, In addition there are annual research student monitoring reviews.

## **d. Income, infrastructure and facilities**

The Department is located on a purpose built campus, which has had a new investment of £3.5 million, with a dedicated library whose information school collection is the largest in Europe. Geographically, the National Library of Wales (NLW) is proximate, with whom the University has very close links, including a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The Department has strong formal and informal connections with NLW staff, including joint research projects and supervision of Masters' and Doctoral students. Staff are supported in the development of research ideas and research applications

through the University Research Office and in particular the social science and arts and humanities research officers.

The Department has a firm commitment to maximising research impact, including facilitating research-based practice as demonstrated by the establishment in 2010 of the Aberystwyth Information Research Seminars (AIRS) series. This is a collaborative partnership between the Department of Information Studies, the National Library of Wales, and Aberystwyth University Directorate of Information Services, sharing contemporary research in the field in a series of bi-monthly seminars. Bringing together academics and researchers from the information professional community, the aims of the AIRS series are to - highlight current research activity and encourage collaborative research amongst the partner organisations; create a forum to discuss research in progress, new approaches, methodologies and methods; invite presentations from internationally renowned external researchers.

The series builds on an established successful research seminar programme, organised by and held within DIS. The original intention of the series organisers was to create a forum which would facilitate exchanges between conventional academe and professional practice in the information world, bringing together relevant research and researchers to stimulate debate and new approaches to professional practice. AIRS has become an interdisciplinary forum for the exploration of a range of contemporary issues and themes which are intrinsically inter- or cross-disciplinary. Staff and postgraduate students from a range of departments within Aberystwyth University, including English, Computer Science, History, Psychology, Law, School of Management and Business and the Institute for Biological and Environmental Sciences, attend in increasing numbers.

Grant funding to support research has been awarded from the National Library of Wales and CyMal Research Grants Scheme for the Peoples' Collection Project. Activities in relation to the curation, conservation, and access to records and materials transformed by emerging technologies are increasingly seminal in contemporary society. Research provision and training in such multi-disciplinary issues is both in its infancy and is fragmented; this consortium seeks to redress these challenges. Funding is committed from the University's Arts and Humanities budget of its Doctoral Career Development Scholarships.

### **Research Centres and infrastructure/facilities**

The Department is now an integral part of the new Institute for Management, Law and Information Science and this provides opportunities for new research synergies. The research of the Department encourages an appreciation of how research evidence should inform professional practice. Policy research is therefore significant. Staff of the Department have a track record of successful applications for research projects with, for example, the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC). Travel to meetings, conferences and outside connections to support the development and continuation of research relationships is supported. The Department will continue to build on its existing strengths in the priority areas indicated with the development of existing staff and the appointment of new staff to extend the Department's expertise in these areas.

### **Research Funding Applications**

The Department is working towards the funding application targets set with the University in relation to both responsive and proactive funding calls. Staff have been successful in achieving funding for projects in collaboration with the National Library of Wales and CyMal. Academic staff engage in, and are encouraged to submit funding applications to research councils, commercial and government sources. The department will work towards the funding application targets set within AU and aim for an

increase in funding ambitions across the department in relation to responsive and proactive opportunities. Research funding applications will provide for continuity of research, laying the ground work for successive research applications, publications, and impacts. The Department is also pursuing Welsh funding aimed at economic and business growth for Wales and this in association with new potential commercial partnerships. The department has become the European Centre for Information Assurance and Cyber-security and will be building upon this presence to leverage new areas into the research and commercial portfolio. Digital curation will also be developed and build on excellent links in this fast growing area of the information world.

#### **e. Collaboration or contribution to the discipline or research base**

##### **Editorships and editorial boards**

Members of staff have been editors and/or guest editors of a number of prominent highly respected journals in the in the field. Broady-Preston is Editor in Chief Library Review (2011-); Editor (Europe & UK) Journal of Educational Media & Library Sciences (2007-) and Editor (Europe and UK) Library Management (2011-). She was Guest Editor: Library and Information Research, Special issue: "Research methodology in library and information studies" (2012) and for Aslib Proceedings (2010-2012). Simon is Associate Editor for Library Review (2011-). Broady-Preston is on the Editorial Boards of Library Management (2011-); Performance Measurement and Metrics: The International Journal for Library and Information Services (2007-) and Library and Information Research (2002-). Ellis serves as the Research Notes Editor, of the International Journal of Information Management (2010-). He is also on the Editorial Boards of Library Review (2011-) and the International Journal of Information Management (1985-); and was on the Editorial Board for Aslib Proceedings (2000-2011-); Higgins is a member of the Editorial board of the Digital Preservation Coalition Technology (2012); Archives and Records: the Journal of the Archives and Records Association (formerly the Journal of the Society of Archivists). Rafferty is Book Review editor of Library and Information Research; and Editorial Board member of Library and Information Research.

##### **National and international research funding panels and committees**

Ellis has been invited to serve on the Arts & Humanities Research Council Strategic Reviewers Group (2013) and serves on the Council's Peer Review College (2006-) and on the Economic & Social Research Council, Peer Review College (2010). He has also served on the Arts & Humanities Research Council Research Panel (2010) and Research Studentship Panel (2009). He was a panel member on the Higher Education Funding Council, RAE, Peer Review Panel for Librarianship and Information Studies (2005-2008). Allen was a Member of the AHRC Postgraduate panel for Librarianship, Information and Museum Studies, (2006-2008). He was also a Member of the Arts and Humanities Research Council Peer Review College for Librarianship, Information and Museum Studies (2008-2012) an independent assessor for: AHRC Research Grants (Standard) Scheme, (2005-) and assessor for ESRC grants (2007-); he has been a Reviewer for applications to the HEA ICS Subject Centre Development Fund Scheme (2009-).

##### **Research advisory/review boards**

Staff have also been widely represented on research advisory and review boards. Broady-Preston was Chair, Higher Education Academy (HEA) Information and Computer Sciences (ICS) Subject Centre Information and Library Studies (ILS) Reference Group (2010-2011) and participated in devising the Framework of Qualifications and Accreditation (FoQA) for CILIP, including membership of the Task and Finish Group with strategic oversight and design of the Framework (2008-9); co-authoring the guide for

degree course designers to the Body of Professional Knowledge (2009; Publication no. 73) and membership of the Expert Advisory Panel on Accreditation (2010-). Ferguson-Boucher serves on the Advisory Board for the US National Science Foundation (NSF) Frontier Grant Funding: Cloud computing breakthrough research: High assurance cloud; and on the Advisory board for the US National Strategy for Trusted Identities in Cyberspace (NISTIC) Frontier Grant: A bridge of bridges: Developing and piloting processes for integrated engineered solutions to online liability, identity, security and privacy.

### **Positions in subject associations and learned societies**

Broady-Preston is a Member, International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) Standing Committee, Management and Marketing Section (2009-); Member, of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) Steering Group, Apprenticeships and Foundation Degrees (2009-2011). She was also a founder member of the Research Methods Community of Practice, funded by HEA LIMES project (2006–2011). External examining and HEI consultancy include Ellis who has been External Examiner for doctorates at the University of Leeds, Manchester Metropolitan University, the University of Sheffield, and University College London; Broady-Preston at Brunel University, Middlesex University and Curtin University of Technology, Perth, Australia; Foster at University College, Dublin; and Rafferty at Loughborough University. Ellis has also been an external REF consultant for several Higher Education Institutions.

### **Conference organization**

The Department's reputation in setting international research agendas is evidenced in the number of international conferences organized. Foster is a Member of the International Programme Committee, *I3 Conference, (2013-)*; Broady-Preston has been a member of the WorldCIST'13 (The 2013 World Conference on Information Systems and Technologies); the 10th Northumbria International Conference on Performance Measurement in Libraries and Information Services (2013); Joint IFLA World Library and Information Congress Programme (2012); Programme Committee Joint IFLA World Library and Information Congress Programme (2011); International Conference, Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries (QQML2012), 9th Northumbria International Conference on Performance Measurement in Libraries and Information Services (2011); Joint IFLA Conference Programme (2010 and 2011); "Marketing Libraries in a Web 2.0 World" Programme Committee (2009-2011). Ellis is a member of the Information Seeking in Context Conference Organizing Committee (2012); was a member of the American Society for Information Science & Technology Conference (2010); and the Conceptions of Library and Information Science, Program Committees (2013). Rafferty is a Review panel member for Knowledge Organisation – Pushing the Boundaries, ISKO UK Conference (2013); and was a Review panel member for Facets of Knowledge Organisation, ISKO UK Conference (2011); Review panel member for Content Architecture: Exploiting and Managing Diverse Resources, ISKO UK Conference (2009); Invited chair of Session: ISKO UK Conference (2009).

### **Refereeing, scholarly awards and fellowship**

Staff have served as referees for the Annual Review of Information Science and Technology; American Society for Information Science and Technology; Aslib Proceedings; Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science; Education for Information; European Journal of Information Systems; Information Processing and Management; Information Research; International Journal of Information Management; International Journal of Information Science; International Journal of Library and Information Science; Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology; Journal of Documentation; Journal of Information Science; Journal of Library and Information Studies; Library Review; Library Trends; and Program.