

<b>Institution: Birmingham City University</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 36</b>
<b>Title of case study: Archives of Popular Culture and Media Histories.</b>
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)

We have worked as media and cultural historians, archive experts and media producers, and collaborated with a variety of public institutions and communities of interest, to draw attention to neglected histories, to respond to the opportunities afforded by new digital technologies, to disseminate archived material, and to interpret it for wide audiences. Through our work we have contributed to an improvement in the understanding and practice of media history, in particular the exploration and archiving of, and engagement with, the popular cultural artefacts which index its lived experience. Most noteworthy has been our contributions to the development of online and offline communities of interest by integrating processes of knowledge exchange into our research, in order to promote co-curation, and discussion about cultural value, memory and collecting. Our impact is measured in the development of popular practices of preservation, in the circulation of media products we have created from archive material, and in our engagements in public projects and with cultural institutions, audiences and policy makers. This work has regional, national and international reach.

<b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)
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The impact in the area of history and archives builds upon work by our six-person Heritage, History and Archives team, led by Dr Paul Long, Reader in Media and Cultural History. Our underpinning knowledge comes from a breadth of research and knowledge exchange activities undertaken by members of the team, including media and cultural history research using archives, analysis and theorisation of mediated histories, and work on online communities of interest. The research activities themselves established or deepened a series of important collaborations with individual and institutional partners outside the university, or engaged and interacted with wider communities of interest. It is therefore both the outputs and processes of research which form the basis of our impact in this area. The focus of this archive work has most often been on the tension between popular and formal media practices, the attempts of professional media workers to engage with popular forms of production, and the democratic potential of creative work and its potential conflict with ‘official’ cultural institutions. This research pre-dates and runs through the survey period, although some is awaiting publication.

Long’s research on innovative if neglected BBC radio producer Charles Parker (1), his monograph on the aesthetics of class (2), and his retrieval and celebration of the work of filmmaker Philip Donnellan (3) are key examples of the way we have employed written and broadcast archives. Long’s work in particular explores a variety of historical projects designed to understand working-class and popular culture, to map it and, in the face of a variety of perceived challenges, maintain its integrity. This research comes from a tradition of postwar social history and cultural studies and an allied interest in creative *production* and popular practice *beyond* the academy. The retrieval activity of Long’s work on Donnellan is anchored in a research-based website (<http://www.philipdonnellan.co.uk>) which continues to ‘expand upon and explore the neglected place of Donnellan in the documentary tradition’.

Professor Tim Wall has also produced a number of studies which make similar use of neglected primary material, including studies of jazz on US and UK radio, and his collaborative studies with Dr Nick Webber on the social use of the transistor radio and headphones. Like Long’s 2011 study of the popular music cultures and business of UK student unions, this work often draws upon scattered material from informal sources, and highlights the need for more systematic digitisation and archiving of popular media products and of cultural activity. This work is, in turn, linked to outputs investigating the nature of popular cultural heritage, on which Long has collaborated with Jez Collins (4).

Long and Wall have also produced a number of studies of the mediation of popular music history, including the BBC’s *Britannia* series of music documentaries (3), television histories of jazz, and their 2013 study of the work of Tony Palmer. In turn the key ideas of totalising histories,

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narrative themes and rhetorical tropes have been the foundation of practice-based work in video and online production. Examples here would include work by Collins, which is realised in the film *Made in Birmingham* (2010) and the online *Birmingham Music Archive* (established 2008), as well as Vanessa Jackson's video and online *What Was Pebble Mill?* project (launched 2010), which aims to document all aspects of the historical production cultures of this important BBC studio (<http://www.pebblemill.org>).

Engagement with archival research into neglected histories is also apparent in Long's role with Vivid Projects' *Participation* initiative, which sought to retrieve the story and forgotten work of the Birmingham Film and Video Workshop (BFVW). Long contributed research to the project catalogue, which in turn has informed a journal article produced in conjunction with gallery director and BFVW founder (5). This work suggests how the re-inscription in the wider account of the workshop movement of the work of BFVW is important for understanding the structure of the history of independent production in film and television, as well as a wider democratic participation in cultural work.

Our impact in this area is also informed by a broader interest within the Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research in the way online practices of sharing and modularisation build communities of interest, often led by taste makers, around what the traditional media have come to call user-generated content. Studies by Wall, extending on a collaboration with Prof Andrew Dubber, have been particularly valuable here (6).

Much of the research and impact work has been possible because a number of funded projects involving outreach and public engagement activities which include:

2007-8: AHRC/BBC KE Pilot: 'Listener online engagement with BBC radio programming'.

2008-10: AHRC KTF: 'New Strategies for Radio and Music Organisations'.

2010: Digital Film Archive Fund - Screen West Midlands/UK Film Council. 3 projects: 'Philip Donnellan Archive'; 'What Was Pebble Mill?'; 'Made in Birmingham'.

2011-13: EU Lifelong Learning Programme – Leonardo Partnership 'Innovative Media and Music Heritage Impacting Vocational Education'.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. Paul Long (2004) 'British Radio and the Politics of Culture in Post-War Britain: The Work of Charles Parker' *The Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast and Audio Media*, 2(3): 131-52.
2. Paul Long (2008) *'Only in the common people': The Aesthetics of Class in Post-War Britain*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
3. Paul Long and Tim Wall (2010) 'Constructing the histories of popular music: the Britannia series' in Ian Inglis (ed.) *Popular Music on British Television*, Ashgate
4. Paul Long and Jez Collins (2012) 'Mapping the Soundscapes of Popular Music Heritage' in Les Roberts (ed.), *Mapping Cultures*, Palgrave.
5. Paul Long with Yasmeen Baig-Clifford and Roger Shannon (2013) "What we're trying to do is make popular politics" The Birmingham Film and Video Workshop' in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 33 (3): 377-395.
6. Tim Wall (2014) 'Mobilising specialist music fans online' in Helen Thornham and Simon Pople (ed) *Content Cultures: Transformations of User Generated Content in Public Service Broadcasting*, IBTaurus.

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Our work has had impact in this area through three principal activities:

- **Public engagement** – using our skills as public historians, and through collaborative work with regional and national organisations, to deploy archives, archive-based research and archive-based multimedia products to increase public engagement and understanding of media and cultural history;
- **Media production** – using our skills as media and cultural historians and as media producers to produce exemplar multimedia products built upon archive material, as well as new forms of crowd-sourced archives;
- **Advisory roles** – using our expertise as users and exploiters of archive material and

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contributing to public advisory and policy bodies to extend the digitisation and cataloguing of archives, widen access to archives, and promote the use of archives in new multimedia products.

These activities have expanded during the survey period, as emergent researchers have joined the Heritage, History and Archives team, and as the number and variety of the organisations with which we work has increased. The resultant expansion in the significance and reach of our work can be seen in a number of specific examples. Collectively this work represents a commitment to collaboration and co-curation with a variety of institutions and communities of interest, and it has contributed to the enhancement of cultural life, public debate and policy, and professional practice.

This increase in scale of impact can be seen clearly in our public engagement work. Long, for instance, has been engaged in a long-term partnership with the Library of Birmingham (LofB), which holds archives of Charles Parker and Philip Donnellan material associated with their radio and film documentary productions, and BBC Midlands, which has extensive holdings of hitherto unused broadcast and production materials. As the Metadata Service Delivery Manager of BBC Information and Archives and the Collection Curator at the Library of Birmingham, testify, Long has been central to realising key institutional initiatives to increase public awareness of local-held archives and the region's cultural heritage. Long has been a keynote speaker at the annual Charles Parker Day, inaugurated in 2004 in collaboration with the Charles Parker Trust, and he organised the 2005 and 2007 events when they took place in Birmingham. As the aforementioned make clear in their testimonials, both the knowledge and skills Long developed in his work on Parker and Donnellan, and regional BBC production in general, have had a significant impact on the way important holdings in the Library of Birmingham and the BBC are organised and deployed. This included work as part of projects funded by Screen West Midlands (SWM). Long's leadership of the *Home, Identity and Citizenship – The Films of Philip Donnellan* project led to the employment of a specialist media archivist to secure and organise the collection, developing professional skills amongst LofB staff, and a range of events, media coverage and social media interaction. This approach was manifest also in the establishment of an SWM-funded website (from 2006) dedicated to Donnellan research and dissemination. This research underwrote a further project funded under the UK Film Council 'Digital Film Archive Fund' (DFAF). In turn, a further aim was to use the project as a lever to reach the kinds of audiences that Donnellan's work incorporated – particularly those in migrant and marginalised communities. Long introduced screenings of films that reached a total audience of more than 500, and featured in the BBC early evening magazine programme 'Inside Out'. Audience figures for this feature are conservatively estimated at 350,000. Research and retrieval work on Parker and Donnellan's practice and productions directly informed the creative work of artist Denis Buckley and the articulation of migrant experiences for contemporary audiences in the form of 'The Bohola Men' (<http://www.denisbuckley.com>). In 2010-11, this production appeared at the *Tulca Season of Visual Art*, Galway, Ireland; *Live Words*, Whitechapel Gallery, London; *Sprint Festival*, Camden People's Theatre, London; and at Rich Mix, London.

The team have also been centrally involved in the organisation of a number of similar public engagement events. These include: *It Came From Pebble Mill* (2010), organised in partnership with the BBC and 7 Inch Cinema, and featuring screenings and talks based upon research from BCU about BBC regional productions; *Film Heritage, Digital Future: Practice and Sustainability for the Film Archive Sector* (2011), which brought film and television archivists together; *Jazz and the Media* (2010 & 2011), focusing on the production of media histories of jazz and including contributions from the production team of the BBC's *Jazz Britannia*; and *The Tube* (2012), which drew on archival broadcast material and contributions from members of the production team to examine the significance of the 1980s Channel 4 popular music show.

We have also drawn on our skills as media producers and worked in collaboration with other production companies to create and distribute radio productions, films and websites which present the findings of earlier research. These productions are also examples of practice-based research, and often emerge from other initiatives, or collaborations with individuals or institutions in our iterative process of research and KT. This is manifest in Collins' co-production with *swish of Made in Birmingham* (2010). This DFAF-funded film is built upon research within the centre and dedicated to retrieving and celebrating cultures centred on reggae, punk and bhangra and the migrant and marginalized communities who produced this music and participated in associated

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scenes. The film repurposed archival footage and music and has been screened locally, nationally and internationally. Locally, the film featured as part of the reopening in 2010 of the Midland Art Centre, which attracted 35,000 visitors ([www.macarts.co.uk/about-mac/](http://www.macarts.co.uk/about-mac/)). Across 21 festivals from 2010 onwards, it has been seen by audiences of around 55,000 people. Our theoretical positions on historical narratives and archiving practice have also had an impact through *The Birmingham Music Archive*, which has cultivated a broad community of amateur archivists involved in the co-curation of memories of popular music practices. Users have generated 1395 uploads across 588 posts and there is a subscriber list of 285 contributors. The site attracts on average 1000 visitors per week. Likewise, the *Pebble Mill* film and website, funded by DFAF and developed by Jackson, makes available original oral history material in the form of interviews and artefacts. This curatorial activity is echoed in her management of social media, through which she has gathered together a community of interest of former BBC employees. In all, she has engaged over 1000 participants, who together have built a digital archive in the absence of any formal material testimony to what was once a major hub of cultural production.

Long's archival research led to his engagement as Chair of the British Library Sound Archive User Panel (2008-9) and, along with Wall, ongoing membership of the UK Radio Archive Advisory Committee (UKRAAC, est. 2011, see: <http://ukradioarchives.com>), also hosted by the British Library. The User Panel promoted access to sound resources amongst researchers and for wider educational use with Long aiding in the organisation of a public event at BL and a national competition for BL users. UKRAAC includes representatives from academia and the radio production sector, and has set itself the ambitious aim of establishing a British Radio Archive as well as establishing processes to archive an ongoing sample of all British radio broadcasts. UKRAAC has also been influential in policy terms. The committee has most recently lobbied key DCMS officials on the issue of radio archives, the results of which we hope will be apparent in the next communication bill to go through Parliament.

Collins has taken on a role as a board member of the Community Archives & Heritage Group a National Advisory Board for the archives sector and also sits on the Heritage Committee of Birmingham Civic Society, and his work on music heritage informed a consultation by Birmingham City Council on the value of popular music industries and culture for the local economy. Research into broadcasting and music history has also informed the practices of Vivid Projects as a result of the *Participation* project, which reached 471 local visitors and was disseminated to partners in Germany, Bulgaria and the Netherlands (<http://www.vividprojects.org.uk/programme/participation/>). Long sits on the board of Vivid and, along with Collins, has contributed to a further three archiving, media and music events which draw upon research and expertise and which have engaged over 200 visitors in person and 62, 530 people through online sites such as Facebook, Vivid Projects and the O2 Academy.

Collins and Long have employed music heritage research and insights into online practices of curation and file sharing to inform their leadership of a €25,000 European Commission-funded project under the Leonardo da Vinci programme, involving partners from across the EU in educational, private and public sectors. 'Innovative Media and Music Heritage Impacting Vocational Education' maintains an online resource that captures insights from research visits and contributions to industry and policy-oriented events, such as Berlin Music Week and Eurosonic at Groningen (<http://www.immhive.org>).

The cumulative impact of these projects is to aid in the retrieval of neglected cultural histories, the engagement of substantial new audiences in exploiting the possibilities of digital communities and, above all, an insistence upon the value of such stories and the meaning of popular culture.

<b>5. Sources to corroborate the impact</b> (indicative maximum of 10 references)
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1. Testimonial letter from Collection Curator, Library of Birmingham.
2. Testimonial letter from Metadata Service Delivery Manager, Information and Archives, BBC.
3. Testimonial letter from Director, Vivid Projects.
4. Testimonial letter from Client Manager for Education, Media and Film (Former), Screen West Midlands.
5. Testimonial letter from Director, Friction Arts.