

<p>Institution: University of Leicester (School of Museum Studies)</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: UoA36 Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management</p>
<p>a. Context</p> <p>Originally established in 1966 to develop knowledge that could shape professional practice and thinking and to provide vocational training, the School of Museum Studies has always aimed to produce research that has impact beyond the academy. Today, every researcher in the School is producing research that impacts the museum and heritage sectors. Moreover, the School is home to the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG), established in 1999 with the explicit goal of pursuing research that would directly engage with cultural institutions and policy makers and funders; shape museum practice; and benefit audiences. The main beneficiaries and users of our research are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Practitioners working in museums, galleries, historic properties and heritage sites; B. Cultural sector agencies and government bodies responsible for establishing policy, setting professional standards, supporting best practice, distributing funding, or supporting the cultural industries; C. Small and medium sized enterprises operating in the cultural sector; D. Museum audiences and users specifically visitors, schools and community groups. <p>Our research impacts these groups in the following ways:</p> <p>(i) Practitioners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>By facilitating the deep review of professional values.</i> Dodd's research with Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) led to a fundamental reconceptualization of the purposes and priorities of botanic gardens. Working with RCMG, BGCI used this research to help Ness Botanic Garden, Winterbourne House and Gardens, and the National Botanic Garden of Wales to 're-evaluate their mission, philosophy, values, goals and practices within a framework of social responsibility' and 'to inform future work with the botanic garden community, both in the UK and globally' (BGCI 2011: 4). • <i>By introducing new conceptual tools.</i> Our on-going research into the nature of lifelong learning in museums has provided museums with new ways of understanding and enhancing the learning experiences they offer to schools and general visitors. (See Case Study One). • <i>By resolving professional problems.</i> The 9/11 Memorial Museum, New York commissioned Marstine to research ethically informed guidelines for the display of human remains. Similarly, Historic Royal Palaces commissioned RCMG to carry out research that shaped new approaches to the Tower of London's interpretation of stories of torture and imprisonment. <p>(ii) Cultural agencies and government bodies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>By developing a synergy between research and practice internationally.</i> Between 2010 and 2012, we co-organised 3 major international conferences for museum practitioners, policy makers and researchers in Taipei, bringing together researchers and museum practitioners from across the world. These meetings encouraged museums and government bodies (including conference partners, the Taiwan government's Council for Cultural Affairs, the National Museum of History in Taiwan, the V&A and National Museums Liverpool) to debate future museum development in the light of research. • <i>By contributing to the shaping of policy.</i> Watson's research into museum communities in England informed the Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage's development of an education strategy for communities with little or no experience of the cultural sector in 2010. Similarly, Golding's research collaboration with the National Museum for Nature and Science, Tokyo, which concerned museum literacy, informed the development of a new national curriculum for museum education. In 2009, Gibson presented her work on cultural value to 50 invited policymaking organisations at a DCMS seminar (<i>Not Only But Also: Capturing the Value of Culture, Media and Sport</i>, ESRC, 2009). Vavoula's research on mobile learning contributed to <i>System Upgrade: Realising the vision for UK Education</i>, produced by the Technology Enhanced Learning Research Programme and launched at the House of Lords in 2012. Dudley's research on migration changed the ways in which agencies, including the International Rescue Committee (US international relief agency), saw law and order issues in refugee camps in Burma.

Impact template (REF3a)

- *By influencing sector-wide standards.* The leading UK body for collections management standards – the Collections Trust - used **Parry's** research on linked data and the semantic web to establish '10 principles for linked data in the culture sector'. The Museums Association drew directly on **Sandell's** research on social justice to inform their *Museums 2020* consultation paper, an initiative designed 'to create a bold vision for UK museums and their impact – the difference museums can have on individuals, communities, society and the environment' (Museums Association 2012).

(iii) SMEs

- *By facilitating innovation and competitiveness.* **MacLeod's** research enabled some of the UK's leading design companies to develop new approaches to interpretive planning and exhibition design by brokering cross-sector networks and generating cross-disciplinary dialogues between SMEs, researchers and cultural institutions (*International Export Potential of the UK Museums and Galleries Sub-sector: a report for UKTI*, Otravista 2009). This led directly to new contracts with the Guggenheim in Bilbao and the International Olympic Committee's Museum in Lausanne for the SME, Metaphor.
- *By forming a platform for commercial networking.* UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) used **MacLeod's** research into exhibition making, museum architecture and interpretive design for a series of funded Design Master classes in Taiwan and Hong Kong in 2011, showcasing the best in UK exhibition design.

(iv) Museum visitors and users

- *By enhancing visitor experiences.* For example, the National Museums Online Learning Project (2009), part of Treasury's *Invest to Save* initiative, sponsored by DCMS and led by the V&A, drew directly on **Parry's** research in its creation of online learning environments for children and adults.
- *By shaping more inclusive engagement with audiences and subject communities.* For instance, **Gibson's** AHRC Connected Communities project 'Understanding Everyday Participation' is enabling researchers sourced from local communities to digitally map their places, routes and narratives of 'everyday participation' in 4 different locations in England and Scotland. **Dodd** and **Sandell's** action research projects, bringing together disability rights activists, senior cultural sector professionals and researchers, have positively impacted visitors' attitudes towards disability (Case Study Two).

b. Approach to impact

We adopt a blend of strategies and approaches to enhance the impact of our research:

- *We respond to emerging needs in the culture sector*, identifying and anticipating issues where our research can be of value and seeking appropriate funding and partners. **Marstine** and **Dodd's** research on ethics responded to the increasingly complex challenges faced by professionals in a period of economic recession. The adoption of roles within the museums sector keeps academics professionally aware and able to apply expertise: **Watson**, a Sheffield Museums trustee; **Parry**, a Tate fellow; **Sandell**, a Museums Association Trustee.
- *We work collaboratively, often using participatory research*, which enables development, testing and evaluation of new forms of practice with non-HEI partners. Collaboration with museums and other non-HEIs is frequently integrated from inception to conclusion of research projects; research questions and objectives are jointly formulated; non HEI partners receive training and participate in data gathering, analysis and so on. For instance, to develop new approaches to the presentation of stories of torture and imprisonment at the Tower of London, **RCMG** formulated a research team comprised of university researchers, the Interpretation Manager at the Tower and exhibition designer, Tom Duncan, to jointly establish research objectives; to generate, analyse and interpret data; and to apply and disseminate findings.
- *We set agendas* through our research. RCMG's Annual Open Evenings showcase emerging research which advances museums as socially relevant institutions. They attract significant national audiences of policy makers, stakeholders and practitioners. We have also been asked to do this for other institutions. This was **Parry's** role at Tate, and in 2012, Arts Council England (the lead body for museum policy and funding) commissioned us to devise, host and deliver a research-led away day for all their staff and sector stakeholders nationwide.
- *We actively disseminate our research to practitioners, policy makers* and other non-HEI audiences. In 2013, **Knell** and **Watson** presented their research on national museums,

immigration and citizenship in central and eastern Europe to museum practitioners in Budapest struggling with political change and resurgent nationalism. In the same year, following research with visitors at national museums in Scotland, Ireland and the Netherlands, the School funded **Dodd** to meet with senior museum staff in each institution to report back and discuss the implications of their findings for their institutional policy and practice.

The University supports our work through the provision of a dedicated, technologically advanced, and accessible building with space for showcasing our research to the public and professionals through exhibitions. We exploit the University's programme of events and its media platforms to extend the reach of our research. For instance, **Parry** presented his research with an invited audience of museum leaders at the University's Leicester Exchanges live debate at The Science Museum, London in 2012 and, in 2011, **Marstine** led an online debate on the new museum ethics informed by her recent research. The University's Enterprise and Business Development office supports the School by producing and disseminating to SMEs and policy makers, case studies which highlight our research impact to potential beneficiaries.

c. Strategy and plans

To further enhance our research impact in the future we are working to **diversify, deepen** and **extend** our research reach. We aim to achieve the following objectives concurrently:

- *To diversify the range of partners with which we collaborate.* **Gibson's** AHRC funded project, 'Understanding Everyday Participation', is requiring us to establish deep and on-going relationships with 17 national-level partners and many local stakeholder organisations, co-producing research on the value of participation to UK society which can be used in diverse areas of application such as town planning and social care.
- *To develop research activities that directly address challenges museums are facing.* For instance, **Watson's** 2013 partnership with the National Army Museum, comprising a conference and publications, debated the challenges of displaying military experiences to help shape the £22 million remodelling of the museum.
- *To develop research that explicitly benefits the public by tackling social inequalities and injustice.* A variety of current and planned research projects within the School are exploring the use of museums and heritage resources to explicitly tackle racism and xenophobia, disability discrimination and homophobia.
- *To extend our reach internationally.* For instance, **MacLeod's** establishment of a formal collaboration with Hong Kong's major museum agency (the Leisure and Cultural Services Department) has formed a bridge for developing research partnerships and projects in South East Asia. This is a continuation of a strategy for this region that has involved partnership and dialogue with professionals in Singapore, Taiwan, Japan and South Korea. **Knell's** collaboration in an ARC-funded project on Australian citizenship, has resulted in the translation and reformulation of his European research as a result of recontextualisation.
- *To foster pathways to impact beyond the cultural sector.* For instance, **Sandell and Dodd's** research on disability representation in museums has engaged new partners and stakeholders in the biomedical community. **Dodd's** on-going research into the contribution of museums to health and wellbeing is forging collaborations between museums and public health agencies, hospital schools and care homes.
- *To explore new ways of tracking and measuring our research impact.* In 2012 we commissioned a study to identify the impact of our research on museum learning (*Evidencing the impact of the GLOs 2008-13*, Learning Unlimited 2013). We plan to build on this approach, integrating the tracking and capture of research impact into our future research activities.
- *To further enhance staff capacity to achieve impact* by sharing best practice within the University; celebrating and rewarding impact successes; and continuing to invest resources in impact-related activities (collaborative events with museum partners, dissemination etc).

d. Relationship to case studies

The two case studies illustrate and evidence the School's long-term commitment to research that impacts beyond the academy. Professional impact has been a central goal of the School for nearly half a century. These two cases present an illustration of what it has been possible to achieve as a result of the establishment of RCMG as a unit that works with all research staff but which retains as its primary mission this engagement with the museum profession and sector.