

<b>Institution: University of Bristol</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 29 — English Language and Literature</b>
<p><b>a. Context</b></p> <p>Research in English literature benefits cultural life, civil society, public discourse, and education at every level. Among the beneficiaries of our research we would cite literary societies, literary and arts festivals, reading and performance groups, charities and community events, professional arts organisations (museums, theatre companies, archives), public bodies, and media (print, broadcasting, online).</p> <p>We would emphasise that the distinction between academic and non-academic impact is often an artificial one in our discipline. Literary scholarship, while engaged in its core purpose of advancing knowledge and understanding within the subject, is not insulated from the world in which texts and ideas are produced and disseminated. The study of Shakespeare's texts, for example, has changed public perception and performance practice over the past fifty years (at least) in ways which were not envisaged as 'impact' when the research was undertaken.</p>
<p><b>b. Approach to impact</b></p> <p>Our approach to impact is shaped by the principle that our subject ought to be outward-facing: institutionally and individually we encourage participation, and look for opportunities to share knowledge of our research in productive social contexts. Many of these opportunities occur locally and relate to Bristol's cultural heritage and distinctive identity.</p> <p><b>Literary societies</b></p> <p>Members of the department belong to, and support, literary societies ranging from the Beckett International Foundation, the Browning Society, the Chatterton Society (based in Bristol), the Thomas Hardy Society, the Kipling Society, the Tennyson Society, and the Wordsworth Trust, all of which have a significant non-academic membership. Scholarship is vital to the dual purpose (conservation and dissemination) of such societies, which themselves now commonly organise or co-sponsor conferences and study-days. For example, Lee's work on Rudyard Kipling's 'The Absent-Minded Beggar' resulted in an article in the Kipling Journal (April 2010), a study-day at Bristol in conjunction with the Kipling Society (June 2010), and a podcast on History Spot, a subsite of the Institute for Historical Research.<sup>1</sup> Matthews's research into nineteenth-century albums resulted in two events at the Wordsworth Trust's Jerwood Centre in Grasmere (July 2013), one for children ('Please contribute to my album') the other a public lecture, 'On Holiday with the Lake Poets', part of the annual series of 'Bindman Talks' based on material from the collections of the Wordsworth Museum &amp; Art Gallery, intended for a general audience.<sup>2</sup></p> <p><sup>1</sup> <a href="https://historyspot.org.uk/podcasts/voluntary-action-history-seminars-podcast/following-absent-minded-beggar-case-history-fund">https://historyspot.org.uk/podcasts/voluntary-action-history-seminars-podcast/following-absent-minded-beggar-case-history-fund</a></p> <p><sup>2</sup> <a href="https://wordsworth.org.uk/learn/the-jerwood-centre.html">https://wordsworth.org.uk/learn/the-jerwood-centre.html</a></p> <p><b>Literary and arts festivals</b></p> <p>Members of the department have taken part in, or have links with (among others) the Bristol Poetry Festival and the Coventry Mystery Plays company, as well as the University's own biennial InsideArts Festival. Participation in such events and activities has a wide social range: of the audience that provided feedback for the inaugural InsideArts Festival in 2011, 24% had never attended University events before; the Twitter channel attracted over 200 followers and there were almost 2000 views of the page.<sup>1</sup> Karlin was a keynote lecturer on 'Poetry and Song', gave a workshop on 'Voice and Text', and was one of the judges of a translation competition (sponsored by Faber and Faber).<sup>2</sup></p> <p><sup>1</sup> <a href="http://www.bristol.ac.uk/research/impact-stories/2012/insidearts.html">http://www.bristol.ac.uk/research/impact-stories/2012/insidearts.html</a></p> <p><sup>2</sup> <a href="http://www.bristol.ac.uk/arts/festival/programme/">http://www.bristol.ac.uk/arts/festival/programme/</a></p> <p><b>Reading and performance groups</b></p> <p>The department hosts one of the University's most innovative widening-participation programmes, the BA in English Literature and Community Engagement (a runner up for the prestigious Universities Association for Lifelong Learning (UALL) annual awards scheme for 2013). Students on this six-year part-time course, mentored by members of staff, undertake as part of their degree to organize reading groups based in their local community, often in challenging contexts of social</p>

disadvantage.

### Charities and community events

Lee is co-investigator, with colleagues in the Faculty of Medicine and Ashton Secondary School, on a research project led by the Arnos Vale Cemetery Trust.

Wright co-organized public readings of Tennyson's *In Memoriam* at St Andrew's Church, Clevedon, with participation by Bristol colleagues, students, and members of the public, in 2009 and 2011; Sir Andrew Motion and Allan Hollinghurst took part in the 2011 event.

Karlin took part in an event celebrating Robert Browning's poem 'The Pied Piper', organised by the charity 'Poet in the City' (April 2012). The charity is 'committed to attracting new audiences to poetry, making new connections for poetry and raising money to support poetry education.'<sup>1</sup>

The Bristol Poetry Institute's inaugural Poetry Competition for Young People (16-19) (2012) attracted sponsorship from Bloodaxe Books and Oxford University Press, which both donated generous book prizes to the schools of the winning poets.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.poetinthecity.co.uk>

### Professional arts organisations (museums, theatre companies, archives)

Members of the department have links with local and national institutions including the British Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, Poetry Can (Bristol), Bristol Old Vic, and the Bristol Theatre Collection. Such organisations both sponsor research and benefit from it for exhibitions, performances, and archival development. For example, Professor Pam King (retired 2013) was Academic Advisor during the review period to the Coventry Mystery Plays Company and Gloucester Mystery Plays; Maude was invited to give a talk at Bristol Old Vic following performances of *Krapp's Last Tape* (April 2012); Matthews is co-organizing an exhibition of the photographer Judith Aaronson's portraits of writers and artists, *Likenesses*, at the Royal West of England Academy (Feb.-Mar. 2014)

### Public bodies

Members of the department are active in professional service for a wide variety of public bodies including research councils and educational trusts, and academic and commercial publishers, for whom research expertise is a pre-requisite of peer review. For example:

- Bennett was peer reviewer and expert advisor for the Research Council for Culture and Society at the Academy of Finland in 2009 and 2011.
- Matthews is a peer reviewer for the Leverhulme Trust.
- Punter is a member of the Strategic Reviewers Group of the AHRC, as well as the Peer Review College; he is a Fellow of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufacture and Commerce (FRSA), and Chair of its West Region; he is a member of the Coimbra Group, Arts and Humanities Task Force.
- Putter is a Trustee of the Eugène Vinaver Memorial Trust, which offers awards for postgraduate research in Arthurian studies.

### Media (print, broadcasting, online)

Karlin was interviewed on BBC Radio 3 Night Waves about Edward FitzGerald's *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* (February 2009) and took part in a filmed documentary on *Khayyám* (July 2009); he was interviewed on Night Waves on the occasion of Bob Dylan's 70th birthday (May 2011); he took part in a discussion on Rudyard Kipling on Radio 3's Proms Plus Literary programme (August 2011), which is available as a podcast.<sup>1</sup> His radio talk on Robert Browning's *Sordello*, 'The Greatest Poem Never Read', was broadcast on Radio 3 (July 2012) and remains available on BBC iPlayer.<sup>2</sup> Wright was a guest on the Radio 4 programme *In Our Time* (June 2011), discussing Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. The programme is available on BBC iPlayer and is featured on the *In Our Time* 19th-century archive.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/radio3/r3arts/r3arts\\_20110811-1624a.mp3](http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/radio3/r3arts/r3arts_20110811-1624a.mp3)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b0118vc6/Twenty\\_Minutes\\_The\\_Greatest\\_Poem\\_Never\\_Read/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b0118vc6/Twenty_Minutes_The_Greatest_Poem_Never_Read/)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0124png>

### **Institutional support**

The University recognises the real value that research can bring, both within and beyond the academy. In English we are mindful, in all the research we undertake, of the opportunities offered at School, Faculty and University level for constructive engagement with the wider community. For example, members of staff are able to call on the assistance of the Centre for Public Engagement, which facilitated the launch of the Bristol Poetry Institute in October 2012, at which the Poet Laureate, Carol Ann Duffy, attracted an audience of 850 people to a free public reading. Other University-level offices including the Research and Enterprise Development office, the Education Support Unit, and the Public Relations Office provide advice, networking, funds and training. Each School has an Impact Director who coordinates and facilitates activity, and School and Department funds are available to meet expenses. The School's workload model allows for time to be allocated to impact as part of a colleague's overall load.

### **c. Strategy and plans**

We intend to build on existing engagement activities, and to adopt a more systematic and reflective approach to events and interactions, so that we gain a clearer, more measurable sense of their reach and value. To this end we propose to do the following:

- Initiate discussion of impact in research groups (Centre for Medieval Studies, Centre for Romantic and Victorian Studies, Bristol Poetry Institute), making sure that public engagement is a standing item on the agenda of all research development meetings.
- Develop further proposals for collaboration with Bristol-based archives and special collections. The Bristol Theatre Archive, for example, on which one of our Impact Case Studies was based, offers a number of opportunities for collaboration, such as exhibitions which bring together artefacts and materials from the collection with literary and historical scholarship.
- Ensure that impact is factored in, wherever appropriate, to research leave proposals, applications for external funding, and plans for conferences and other events.
- Make public engagement a standing item for discussion in staff review meetings, encouraging colleagues to think through their own research plans from this perspective.
- Integrate research activity more closely with the English Literature and Community Engagement degree, especially the reading groups run by second- and third-year ELCE students in Bristol.
- Develop initiatives for media dissemination of research, especially with regard to online media. For example, both the Centre for Romantic and Victorian Studies and the Bristol Poetry Institute plan to provide podcasts of guest lectures and research seminars.
- Develop better (more systematic, more accurate) methods of collecting data and feedback from our public engagement activities.

### **d. Relationship to case studies**

Two of our case-studies are archive-based projects—'Transforming access to, and raising awareness of, the Penguin Archive', and 'The Revival or Re-invention of Early European Performing Arts'. Both exemplify the Department's commitment to exploitation of archival resources at Bristol, bringing material into the public domain which is of interest to a wide audience. The Penguin Archive Project's programme of events, including lectures, study days, exhibitions and poetry readings, enabled public engagement to take place in many forms and at different levels. The Revival or Re-invention of Early European Performing Arts provides a resource both for scholars, making possible a new sub-field of research, and for civic and community groups and authorities who seek to revive or invent civic festivals. Our third case study, based on successive editions of Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle's *Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*, highlights the ways in which research can change understanding and pedagogical practice in universities and colleges worldwide.