

<p>Institution: Birkbeck College</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: English Language and Literature UoA 29</p>
<p>a. Context</p> <p>The main non-academic user groups, beneficiaries and audiences for the unit's research during this assessment period have been:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Organisations. Collaborations through public programmes with the cultural industries, advising, curating, and participating in public programmes with the BBC, the Wellcome Collection, the South Bank Centre, the British Museum, the British Library, the National Theatre, the Institute of Contemporary Arts, the John Soane Museum, the Dickens Museum, the Wigmore Hall, the Photographers' Gallery and Tate, among many others. • Creative industries and practitioners through extensive collaborations in art, poetry, theatre and performance by colleagues across the unit. The expansion of the Creative Writing and Theatre staff has ensured porous boundaries with the London's cultural world. • Media industries, contributing to public discourse, influencing the public understanding and opinion of literature and allied arts through dissemination of literary and cultural research in the national and international media and non-academic publishing. • Educational collaborators, for instance developing innovative research-based programmes beyond the academy, as in the collaboration with Wigmore Hall and through the Medical Humanities with the Kent, Surrey and Sussex Deanery, which has resulted in diverse collaborations by several colleagues with the Wellcome Institute, the Royal College of Psychiatry, and Barts' Pathology Museum around issues of culture and health. <p>The range of potential impacts of the unit are a reflection of a commitment to inter-disciplinary, open inquiries which resist narrow limitation of audience or periodisation and are embedded in Birkbeck's long-standing mission as the college of the working Londoner.</p>
<p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>The English department's commitment to collaboration has been underpinned since 1993 as the HE partner in the London Consortium PhD programme, which brought Birkbeck together with the Architectural Association, Tate, the Science Museum, and the ICA. The Consortium pioneered the linkage of HE research with cultural institutions. This collaboration formalised the mix of literary and cultural studies for which the English department is known. We have evolved a new set of collaborations, with the British Film Institute and the Jewish Museum. We developed links with a diverse range of museums and galleries, from large institutions like the British Museum and Tate to smaller ones like the Soane Museum and the Flinders Petrie Museum.</p> <p>Since 2008, these collaborations have been increasingly professionalised. The College reorganised the External Relations Unit to give improved press, social media and internet support. The College built a database of experts designed to be used to identify expert commentators and consultants. In 2010, the College has developed its open access repository, making research openly available online where possible. In 2011, The School of Arts appointed an Impacts and Knowledge Exchange Manager to develop a strategic and co-ordinated approach to impact. The Manager works with colleagues to foster new partnerships with non-HEIs, through various types of activity, seeking collaborations with institutions, assisting funding bids and formulating impact pathways. The School also has a Digital, Online and Media Co-ordinator to update continually content and disseminate news stories related to research and develop an archive of free podcasts of talks and events.</p> <p>The department has focused on the issue of impact at successive research 'away days' and School-level events with external advisors. It has sought ways to encourage participation across the range of staff, from graduate students, through early career to senior members. The department has a number of research centres and networks, which are the principal avenues for staging research, publicizing it, and developing collaborations beyond HE. Centres are given seed-funding annually but apply for external funding, which helps focus on impact pathways. These Centres are the context for much of the conference and symposium activity of the department. Individual members of staff can also apply for grants to the School Research Committee to aid their work, where impact is a crucial parameter for grant approval. The department has developed flexible staffing arrangements – for instance, allowing Colin Teevan to take flexible leave in autumn 2013 in order to work on a major television series scripting project. A recognition of the impact status of this work was a key element in the decision.</p>

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Between 2008-13, there are five key indicators which can organize the unit's impact:

- 1) **Dissemination into the public sphere.** Contribution to public discourse is a capacity-builder for generating impact, and the unit encourages participation in the public sphere through journalism, media and digital communication. Colleagues write or review for *The Times*, *Guardian*, *New Statesman*, *Financial Times*, *Times Literary Supplement*, and have participated leading literary festivals in England. Specific research has resulted in commissioned pieces for *DIVA*, *History Today*, the *Independent* and *Daily Telegraph*. Colleagues with recognised research expertise broadcast on BBC radio shows such as *Night Waves*, *The Verb* and *Front Row*. Litt and Luckhurst have written and presented BBC radio documentaries. Leslie, as acknowledged expert in cultural theory, has appeared on *In Our Time*, *Thinking Allowed* and also presents on the alternative London radio station Resonance FM. There are five open-access e-journals based in the unit: *19*, *Alluvium*, *Writers' Hub*, *Readings: Response and Reaction to Poetries*, and *Pores* and are edited by staff; *Dandelion* is the journal edited by post-graduates and supported by the AHRC. Each year, the public-facing 'Birkbeck Arts Week' in May has expanded audiences, and colleagues are involved in the annual Bloomsbury Festival.
- 2) **Shaping programmes of cultural institutions.** Colleagues have developed research programmes in collaboration with, or helped shape public programmes of, major institutions such as the British Museum, Tate, the Science Museum, and the British Film Institute. Engaging with our local community, we have links with museums in Bloomsbury, where impact on the intimate scale can have large effects on the understanding of national heritage. These include the Dickens Museum, with which we have longstanding connections, and the Soane Museum, Royal College of Surgeons, Flinders Petrie Museum, and Wellcome Collection.
- 3) **Collaborative creative practice.** Colleagues have developed projects with, for instance, the Poetry Centre at the South Bank, the Wigmore Hall, and Bury Museum, creating programmes and performances through research in theatre, poetics and creative writing. Swain's reputation as a pioneer in teaching theatre directing has produced a team of staff and alumni with reach into the London theatre scene. Monks and Teevan have advised the National Theatre and built links with the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts. Theatre Directing staff and alumni radiate through the country to direct plays. At one point in 2012, there were 7 plays on stage in London written by, adapted from, produced or directed by Birkbeck staff or alumni.
- 4) **Advisory roles.** The social policy impacts of literature academics are limited, but expertise has been called on in advisory roles to the Parliamentary Forum on Trans Issues in the House of Lords (on which Jo Winning sits). Winning acts as lay observer on the training programmes of the Royal College of Psychiatry. Expert advice is sought by academic and commercial publishers and media outlets. Staff have advised cultural programmes for TV companies, including Channel 4, BBC, ITV, the Discovery Channel, and advise on book proposals.
- 5) **Education beyond the academy.** Collaboration beyond the HE sector is part of the Birkbeck research mission. Writers like Teevan speak on their work in schools; research like the Livingstone Spectral Imaging Project (about recovering the 'lost' David Livingstone diary through new technology) had global media impact but also took the findings of the project into a diary-writing project for schools. The Medical Humanities initiative has established a cross-disciplinary MA with the Kent, Surrey and Sussex Deanery, designed to impact on the everyday practice of health professionals in their engagements with patients, and also forging connections between critics, artists and medical training in related events and symposia.

c. Strategy and plans

The English department is committed to supporting an impactful research culture from Medieval period onward, and encourages collaborations among staff across historical divides. We continue to support and fund research in all of these areas. The innovative work of the **Material Texts Network** has included work from Medieval illuminated manuscripts and travel writing, Renaissance Bibles and Enlightenment chap-books to the illustrated works of contemporary artist Tom Phillips. Research in the Network has produced commentary in both the *TLS* and the *London Review of Books*. Collaborations are developing with institutions like the Huntington Library in California, where Bale, Cale, and Senior have been involved with fellowships and conferences. This model of research that interconnects across period and discipline is crucial to departmental identity.

These principles are supported by institutional structures. The College produces a College Research Strategy, which outlines a framework for action. The consolidation of methods to widen

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impact is integral to this. At School level we foster cross-fertilizations with Museum Studies, Curation and Art programmes.

In the School, two innovations will enhance the impact strategy of the English unit across all fields.

1) A substantial donation from a former student, combined with Higher Education Innovation Fund money, established the Forum for the Arts at Birkbeck, an events space in the School with cinema, gallery, and theatre studio. The first season in 2013 included an exhibition of the work of feminist photographer Jo Spence (whose archive was donated to Birkbeck), an exhibition of photographs by Sephira Salazar, a symposium on the tenth anniversary of the start of the Iraq War, a film programme associated with the Birkbeck Institute of the Moving Image, with visiting artists and directors, public poetry readings, and the exhibition 'Touching the Book' (funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the RNIB) and the symposium, 'The Victorian Tactile Imagination'.

2) The unit will benefit from initiatives to enhance collaborations with non-HEI partners. These include an interdisciplinary 'Cultural Inquiry' programme, designed to produce collaborations with partners in cultural and creative industries, rearticulating the model of the London Consortium. The School's Impact and Knowledge Exchange manager focuses this agenda.

In view of evolving networks amongst colleagues, research centres have emerged that will lead to impactful research. To concretize these plans, research in contemporary literature can help map the potential. The **Centre for Contemporary Literature** was approved in 2011. Its signature events are author symposia. These are often conducted with the author and have grown in size and diversity of audience. Consequently, Penguin Books contacted Brooker to collaborate on a Le Carré event with the Barbican in 2013. The Centre will host Geoff Dyer and Jennifer Egan in 2014. In the last two years, the unit established a relationship with the Booker Prize for an author interview to connect them public audiences (Sarah Waters in 2011; Ishiguro in 2012). These were attended by 1000 people, with Faber distributing thousands of free novels to students. The **Centre for Contemporary Theatre** is a space where theatre artists reflect on practice. The Centre stages dialogues and speakers have included Tom Stoppard, Philip Ridley and David Edgar. The Centre established a series of Visiting Theatre Research Fellows to allow artists to collaborate with staff and studio space to devise work, culminating in performances and symposia. In 2013 a **Centre for Medical Humanities** began to bring together Birkbeck scholars with medical professionals to host events to communicate the transformative potential of medical humanities research on practice in the NHS. Its interventions will be underpinned by a historical understanding of medicine, linking to the work done in the Victorian period by Tilley, McAllister and Bown. In creative writing, the **Mechanics Institute Review**, an annual anthology of work in creative writing, reached its tenth year in 2013. The **Writer's Hub** web-site was founded in 2010, backed by grants from HEIF and London CreativeWorks. The Hub showcases authors, publishes reviews, blogs, poetry, and hosts public readings. Future plans include an e-book imprint. The AHRC funded the online digital archive of live performances for the **Centre for Contemporary Poetics**. With the publishing imprint Veer Books and the online journals *Readings* and *PORES* these join the unit's other e-journals to suggest a vibrant digital culture. The arrival of Edwards in September 2013, who has garnered substantial public interest from press around the world for her project to develop the **Open Library of Humanities**, was a strategic appointment to meet the open access agenda. Several of these show the promise of generating further impact if properly nurtured.

d. Relationship to case studies

All the individual impact studies are embedded in a research environment at College, School and Department level. **Voiceworks** emerged from the Centre for Poetics. The Centre gained support from the College in 1999 and the Voiceworks programme was first funded through the Centre.

Teevan was appointed following the successful growth of Theatre and Creative Writing. His case study shares the war research context of other colleagues, such as McLoughlin. **Luckhurst's** research on the supernatural has had support from several Centres, financing symposia including 'Magical Thinking' in 2007 and the 'Night Shift' series of seven symposia in 2010-11 and the conference on W. T. Stead with the British Library in 2012. The 'Sentimentality' case study builds on the depth of scholarship in the department's **Centre for 19thC Studies** and its connections to London institutions that communicate 19th century history, such as the Dickens Museum.