

Institution: The University of Edinburgh
Unit of Assessment: 29 English Language and Literature
Title of case study: 3. 'What are you Reading?': Editing Robert Louis Stevenson
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>The Stevenson project, in collaboration with the National Library of Scotland, has built bridges between general and scholarly readers of a major, popular Scottish author. The project helped to change the ways in which members of the public understand the significance of editorial work and book-history. Providing readers with practical skills with which to approach varying editions of Stevenson's work, it promoted broader understanding of how we encounter the work of major authors. It has also influenced the ways in which the National Library of Scotland (NLS) communicates its central mission to the public, by demonstrating how to expand appreciation not just of literary works themselves but also of the Library's collections and its role in preserving and presenting our literary heritage.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Funded by a £184k Royal Society of Edinburgh Major Research Grant for the Arts and Humanities, the Stevenson project addresses interest in one of the most enduringly popular Scottish authors—Robert Louis Stevenson. At the core of the project is a definitive edition of all of Stevenson's work (39 volumes), begun in 2009 at a workshop funded by a £7k Royal Society of Edinburgh Workshop Grant, which is expected to be complete by 2017. The project relies on original research into the historical contexts and material production of Stevenson's work, both to extend and activate public knowledge of his writing and to educate the public in the significance of editing and book-history in understanding and preserving our literary culture.</p> <p>Led by Penny Fielding (Professor of Nineteenth-Century Literature, appointed UoE 1995) with the participation of Robert Irvine (Senior Lecturer, appointed UoE 1999) and Alex Thomson (Senior Lecturer, appointed UoE 2006), the project is run by Scottish Writing in the Nineteenth Century (SWINC), a research grouping in the department of English Literature that explores the contexts for Scottish writing and organizes public and academic events. The participants are all published researchers of Stevenson's work whose expertise informs the editorial project. Fielding is one of four General Editors of the new complete works of Stevenson. Irvine has edited <i>Prince Otto</i> (in press for 2014), and Thomson is volume editor of <i>Memories and Portraits</i>, one of a 5-volume set of Stevenson's Essays, the first time they will have been brought together, edited and indexed. These volumes each contain an introduction to the historical and literary context, extensive explanatory endnotes, and a history of the text from inception to reception, as will all subsequent volumes in the series. The completed edition, contracted to Edinburgh University Press, will include all of Stevenson's published work, much of it edited for the first time. The Edition team has already revealed much regarding Stevenson's practices as a writer and historical researcher, his collaborations, the way he amended his work and the history of his publication and readership. The Stevenson project is also creating a database of digitizations of all the materials drawn on for the edition. Clean and fully searchable texts of all the early publications and editions of Stevenson's works, sourced from the National Library of Scotland's holdings, will be made available through the NLS website.</p>
<p>3. References to the research</p> <p>3.1 Edited book. Penny Fielding (ed). <i>The Edinburgh Companion to Robert Louis Stevenson</i>. Edinburgh University Press, 2010. Includes Chapters: 'Romance and Social Class' (Robert Irvine), 'Stevenson's Poetry' (Penny Fielding), 'Stevenson's Afterlives' (Alex Thomson). (Submitted in REF2.)</p> <p>3.2 Journal article. Alex Thomson, 'Familiar Style in <i>Memories and Portraits</i>,' <i>Journal of Stevenson Studies</i> 9 (2012) 119-148. (Can be supplied by HEI on request.)</p> <p>3.3 Edition. Robert Irvine (ed). <i>Prince Otto</i>. Edinburgh University Press, in press for 2014. (Proof copy can be supplied by HEI on request.)</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

3.4 Penny Fielding (PI). 'The New Edinburgh Edition of the Collected Works of Robert Louis Stevenson'. Royal Society of Edinburgh Major Research Grant for Arts and Humanities. 2011-2014. £183,490.

3.5 Penny Fielding (PI). 'Robert Louis Stevenson in the 21st Century', Royal Society of Edinburgh Research Workshop Grant. 2009. £7,290.

4. Details of the impact

A commitment to enhancing the broader impact of its research was built into the Stevenson project from its inception. The impacts described here all occurred during the process of the project, in a series of activities accompanying work on the edition that helped members of the public to develop an enhanced appreciation both of the work of the National Library of Scotland, and of how textual scholarship can enrich cultural capital.

Between October and December 2011, a public engagement programme, jointly organized by the NLS and SWINC, mounted a series of three public talks and workshops at the NLS, presented under the general title *What Are You Reading?*. This directly introduced over 200 members of the public to the Library's extensive Stevenson holdings, offering the opportunity to gain hands-on experience of textual scholarship, to appreciate the changing receptions of this major Scottish author, and to understand the nature and purposes of the NLS collections. The three events drew directly on the Stevenson Edition team's findings and NLS holdings. The first offered lectures on the textual history of canonical works such as *Hamlet* and *Ulysses*; the second discussed the value of edited texts for general readers along with an electronic demonstration of digital editing. The third event was a group workshop in which live problems generated by work on the edition were explored in small groups led by members of the Stevenson editorial team. Possible solutions were investigated and participants generated their own mini-editions to take away. The programme was booked out with 100 people at each of the first and second events, and 3 groups of 6 attending the workshops. Participants were mainly Scottish-based but also came from the rest of the UK, France, Germany, Asia and the USA. (Corroborating sources: 5.1, 5.6)

Impact on members of the public is evident in various forms. Firstly, participants' understanding of the role and purpose of the NLS was expanded by enabling them to see the workings behind the public face of the library. They were engaged not just, as already interested readers, with an author's works, but with the obligations involved in the acquisition and management of the collections of a copyright library, in particular why the NLS should collect so many different editions of the same work. The edition team also brought the public 'inside' the process of its own research, by enabling participants to observe and even try for themselves the methods of textual scholarship used by the edition. This generated a substantially increased appreciation of the vital but often overlooked role that textual scholarship plays in understanding of Stevenson's (and other authors') work and significance. Questionnaire responses testified to these changed perspectives. Of 82 respondents to questionnaires over the 3 events, 46 reported they had a new perspective on texts and almost half said they now understood how specific examples of textual scholarship worked. The interactive element of the final workshops was particularly valued ('It was very unusual and was very interesting to have the experience of a workshop with hands-on experience'). Participants reported changes in personal engagement with literature, suggesting they had gained, 'an awareness of editing processes and the incentive to consider differences in editions and the consequences of these differences'; 'Definitely sparks curiosity and the desire for more in depth discussions & thinking.' (Corroborating source: 5.6)

Beyond the *What are you Reading?* events, research for the edition has also led not only to a significant widening of public access to the full corpus of Stevenson's writing, but to the engagement of general readers with questions surrounding the editing, reception and continuing significance of his works. This is apparent from media attention during the early stages of the edition: for example, the decision to regroup the short stories according to Stevenson's own wishes was covered in *The Observer* (24.4.2011) and *The Scotsman* (27.4.2011). A significantly widening body of readers has also been drawn in via the project's interactive blog that directly engages the public with the textual editing of Stevenson's works. Traffic on the blog has increased dramatically since it was launched in July 2010, from 426 visits in the first year to over 7k in 2013. Much of this traffic comes from outside the academy, and members of the public have

been active in themselves suggesting manuscript readings for the edition and possible sources for elements of Stevenson's texts. The project blog has thus created an active on-going forum for exchange and development, demonstrating how the impacts of the research are extending well beyond the workshop series. (Corroborating sources: 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.8)

The project brought significant benefit to the National Library of Scotland. The Royal Society of Edinburgh grant covers the costs for both the digitized archive of NLS Stevenson holdings, and the material costs of workshop 3 in the *What Are You Reading?* series. That programme specifically helped the Library to communicate and demonstrate to a wider audience the value of its work in preserving and presenting Stevenson's writings, and the importance of its collections of multiple editions of the same work. It also offered opportunities for the use of these resources beyond the professional scholarly community. This was clearly appreciated by participants ('A different 'take' on the usual book centred talks'), with two thirds of questionnaire respondents saying they would definitely attend future NLS events. The NLS Events Officer confirmed that the project had introduced new practices in communicating the Library's mission: 'the events have been a huge success It is the Library's mission to provide access to and promote the remarkable items that we hold in our collection and this programme of events has done this effectively through its series of fascinating lectures ... and workshops'. (Corroborating sources: 5.1, 5.6, 5.7)

The Stevenson project was devised so that its initial impact on participants of the NLS programme will continue to extend to new, potentially global communities of readers. The digitization project will provide the Library with a valuable upgraded public-access searchable electronic archive of its Stevenson holdings. While attracting new users of the collections, this will also disseminate the project's developing insights into Stevenson's working practices, readership and significance during his lifetime. As this resource grows it will build up a complete picture of his works' textual history which will be available to all NLS users. This extended reach is in keeping with the Stevenson project's emphasis on enabling general readers to make richer judgments about literary texts and the significance of their cultural history. (Corroborating source: 5.5)

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

URLs below are original links. Should any be unavailable, see archived copies at: www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/REF2014REF3B/UoA+29.

- 5.1 Contact: Events Officer, National Library of Scotland. Can confirm 'What are you Reading' events, participant numbers and domiciles.
- 5.2 Project blog, 'EdRLS' (<http://edrls.wordpress.com/>). Demonstrates active engagement of public with textual editing of Stevenson's works.
- 5.3 Newspaper article. 'Robert Louis Stevenson gets his revenge on sneaky literary agent – 120 years later', *The Observer* 24 April 2011. (<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/apr/24/robert-louis-stevenson-fairytales>) Corroborates claim of generation of public interest in editorial issues.
- 5.4 'Fairy tale ending for Stevenson book row', *The Scotsman* 26 April 2011. (<http://www.scotsman.com/news/fairytale-ending-for-stevenson-book-row-1-1607989>) Corroborates claim of generation of public interest in editorial issues.
- 5.5 Contact: Digital Collections Specialist, National Library of Scotland. Can confirm project's agreement with the NLS to provide clean and updated digitizations of the Library's Stevenson holdings.
- 5.6 'What Are You Reading?' participant questionnaire digest. Confirms participants' data and quoted responses. (Can be supplied by HEI on request.)
- 5.7 A letter from the Development and Events officer, NLS. Corroborates quoted statement, paragraph 5. (Can be supplied by HEI on request.)
- 5.8 E-mail from Richard Dury, General Editor Stevenson edition. Confirms web hits on the blog. (Available from HEI on request.)