

Institution: Edinburgh Napier University
Unit of Assessment: 29 English
Title of case study: <i>Enhancing the Literary Reputation of Robert Louis Stevenson</i>
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Research at Edinburgh Napier University led to a range of activities enhancing the international literary reputation of Robert Louis Stevenson (RLS). Professor Linda Dryden has made a significant contribution to Stevenson's profile by promoting his reputation as a writer of serious and enduring literature for adults. This was achieved through public engagement and outreach activities that enhance the cultural lives of the audiences. The impact is measured through the creation of the RLS website, the establishment of RLS Day in Edinburgh, the acquisition of an RLS library, public lectures, numerous media appearances, a conference, and the <i>Journal of Stevenson Studies (JSS)</i> giving the impact both a local and an international profile.</p> <p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Since his death in 1894, Stevenson's literary reputation had been that of a children's author. The research aimed to address this reductive perception, bring Stevenson's work to a wider audience, and enhance his reputation as a serious author. Stevenson is recognised largely through the cultural currency of <i>Treasure Island</i> and <i>Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde</i>. The research conducted, and the subsequent initiatives, like the RLS Website and RLS Day (5.1, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, and 5.7) were designed to heighten awareness of the breadth and impact of Stevenson's work. Building on Dryden's research, a number of initiatives have impacted on this narrow perception of Stevenson and enhanced his reputation on an international scale.</p> <p>The research was carried out by Dryden, who has worked at the University since 1998. Output 2.1 places Stevenson within the popular gothic mode alongside Oscar Wilde and H. G. Wells. Outputs 2.2, 2.3 and 2.6 widen Stevenson's influence to include Joseph Conrad. Output 2.3 brings Stevenson into a postcolonial frame of reference and 2.4 details his influence on popular culture. Dryden's research gave her a thorough knowledge of Stevenson, causing her to recognise that he was an undervalued writer in Scotland and in the international arena. Dryden used her knowledge and expertise to institute the RLS website and to launch RLS Day, now an annual event in Edinburgh, designed to heighten public awareness of Stevenson. Dryden has been co-editor of the internationally refereed <i>JSS</i> since 2004, when she organised an international conference on Stevenson and Conrad: she has attended every RLS conference from 2002 to 2012.</p> <p>Based on her research, and her growing influence in Stevenson studies, Dryden received a grant from the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland for the website, launched in 2009. The website was initiated in order to make Stevenson's life and works available to a global audience. Dryden's knowledge of Stevenson through her books and journal papers and the research carried out by her research assistant, Dr Hilary Grimes, informed the structure and content of the site. The only other RLS website of any substance was one created by Professor Richard Dury of the University of Bergamo, Italy. This site was badly structured and in need of overhauling.</p> <p>Using her research Dryden created a unique and expertly structured new site with the assistance of Grimes, and Professor David Benyon, a web-design expert, based at Edinburgh Napier University. Back issues of the <i>JSS</i> are available on the site, making Dryden's research and that of others freely available to the public. Further research for the website was extensive, involving written content, and research into web design to tailor the site to a wide range of audiences. A comprehensive resource was created through research into Stevenson's life and travels, and a photographic archive in Edinburgh City Council's Capital</p>

Collections. The site thus contains photographs never seen in public before. An illustrated, Stevenson literary travel guide was created, informed by Dryden and Grime's research. Dury's website was incorporated into the site, and he continues to advise on content and updates to the site. Dryden's research on Stevenson continues to inform both the website and the other initiatives detailed at 4 below.

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

Publications

1. Dryden, L. (2003) *The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles: Stevenson, Wilde and Wells*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, ISBN 1-4039-0510-X.
2. Dryden, L., Stephen Arata and Eric Massie (2009). *Robert Louis Stevenson and Joseph Conrad: Writers of Transition*. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 236 pp., ISBN 978-0-89672-653-6
3. Dryden, L. (2011) 'Literary Affinities and the Postcolonial in Stevenson and Conrad.' In Michael Gardiner, Graeme Macdonald and Niall O'Gallagher eds., *Scottish Literature and Postcolonial Literature: Comparative Texts and Critical Perspectives*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. pp. 86-97.
4. Dryden, L. (2010) 'Stevenson and Popular Culture' in *Nordic Journal of English Studies Vol. 9. 3* (2010). Invited paper. Special Issue: Popular Culture. pp. 11-24.
5. Dryden, L. (2013) 'The Gothic: Detection and Science Fiction.' In Carolyn McCracken-Flesher ed, *Approaches to Teaching the Works of Robert Louis Stevenson. Approaches to Teaching World Literature*. New York: The Modern Languages Association of America pp. 96-103.
6. Dryden, L. 'Romance-ing *Treasure Island*: Stevenson and Conrad.' *Journal of Stevenson Studies* September 2013.

Quality

Output 1 was included in RAE 2008. Output 6 is included in REF 2013.

Grants

£34,000 from the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland to create a new Stevenson website.

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

The impacts of the research were achieved through a series of Stevenson events, the website and media and public engagement. RLS Day arose as a result of Dryden's research, and that of Grimes, which afforded the knowledge, expertise and reputation to launch this initiative. The web team's research informed the content of the website and thus Stevenson's reputation is enhanced through a public-facing, expertly informed electronic resource.

RLS Day: Widespread Impact

Collaborations with the Edinburgh, UNESCO City of Literature Trust (COL), (5.4) concerning RLS enabled the impact to reach the wider community and contribute to Edinburgh's literary reputation. RLS Day is a major success, becoming an international event with a wide reach beyond academia.

There were two RLS Days up to the Impact Case Study census date. RLS Day 2011 was modest in size, but, by 2012, eight city-wide events took place' including pop-up theatre and the world's first RLS Day Tachemob Flashmob, a spontaneous gathering of people in Parliament Square sporting RLS-style moustaches, simultaneously reading passages from Stevenson's works. These events attracted an estimated audience of 630 in total. In 2011 an evening event with actor and author Nigel Planer and writer Ian Rankin attracted an audience of 100. In 2012 Planer was joined by the actor John Sessions attracting an audience of 250. On RLS Day in 2012 the COL website received 4465 visits, a 300% increase on average daily traffic, #RLSDay trended in the UK for 3 hours, and the Stevenson website had a 100% increase in monthly visits, and a 200% increase in daily traffic. RLS Day featured on the *Guardian* photo galleries, and was *Guardian Picture of the Day* on November 13, 2012 (5.6, 5.7). Social media was extremely active with individuals tweeting 'Happy RLS Day' to their followers throughout the day.

There was coverage in the national press and radio, and mainstream periodicals between 11 and 14 November 2013. Local newspapers covering the day include *Scotland on Sunday*, *Edinburgh Evening News*; *The Times*; *Edinburgh Metro*, *The Herald* and the *Daily Record*. Nationally, the event was covered by *The Mail* and *The Sunday Times*. Television and radio coverage included *STV Edinburgh*, BBC News Scotland and BBC Radio Scotland Newsdrive (5.5).

A free RLS Day QR code directing people to the website, specially created at Edinburgh Napier, was available at various locations in the city. The French Association *Sur Le Chemin de Robert Louis Stevenson* exhibition, containing images, photographs, drawings and texts illustrating RLS's travels across France, was held in the Edinburgh Central Library from 15 November –14 December, 2012.

Developing the Stevenson website alerted Dryden to the value of creating such outward facing, public-oriented projects. As a result of the website Dryden was contacted by Nigel Planer, who has become the patron of RLS Day. The production team for Michael Portillo's *Great Railway Journeys* found Dryden through the website, and Stephen Fry tweeted about the site on the day that it was launched. Dryden has also formed good working relationships with well-known local writers such as Ian Rankin, James Robertson, Louise Welsh and Ron Butlin. The web site and RLS Day have proven to be very successful routes for maximising the impact of Dryden's research.

RLS Web Site

The RLS website is the most comprehensive site available for Stevenson. The figures below define the reach of the website:

- 13,000 hits per month. On RLS's birthday in 2009 this peaked at 20,000 on one day.
- Individuals from over 200 countries have viewed the site. It has had over 1,200,000 separate page views.
- 75% of visitors are from outside the UK
- Links to RLS site from elsewhere: 13,000
- Time on site: 16% of visits between 3 and 30 minutes
- Google search: no. 1 site when searching R. L. Stevenson
- Awarded the international 'Talking Hands Award' for usability
- Included in the NINES Project at the University of Virginia.
- Added to the British Library Database of websites

The Ernest Mehew RLS collection and the Gelius Leopold RLS collection were donated to the University as a result of this presence on the web. Once these collections of books have been catalogued and housed in a bespoke location at the Merchiston campus, it is planned to allow public access to the collection in order to bolster research into and interest in Stevenson. Dryden intends to take on another PhD student in the Spring of 2014 whose research will be focused on Stevenson and who will find in this collection the largest Stevenson library of any university in the UK.

Other Impact

Features on Stevenson with references to Dryden's work:

- *Scotland on Sunday* (2012)
- *The Scotsman* (2011)
- *The Scottish Herald* (2012)
- *The Edinburgh Evening News* (2013)
- Dryden has appeared on Drive Time Radio (Summer 2012)
- Dryden has appeared on Scottish Television's Evening News (November 2011)

Other activities:

- Attendance Lauriston Castle lecture, 15 June 2011: 20.
- Attendance lecture for British Overseas League, 12 December 2012: 50
- Special public *Gothic Cities/Gothic Literature*. COL Reading Event: One City/One Book: *Jekyll and Hyde*. Speakers: Professors Glennis Byron (Stirling), Ian Campbell (Edinburgh), Laurence Davies (Glasgow), February 2008. Audience: 60.
- Collaborations with Edinburgh City of Literature on a literary trail for RLS

These impacts demonstrate a wide public reach, the beneficiaries being the general public in Edinburgh, and, via media and electronic resources, across the globe. Awareness of Stevenson as a major Scottish literary figure has been raised considerably by RLS Day and the resultant media coverage. Dryden's aim is to make RLS Day a truly international event, thus enhancing Stevenson's reputation further. To this end, more activities took place in 2013 attracting a larger audience and significant media coverage.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

(5.1) Robert Louis Stevenson website: www.robert-louis-stevenson.org

(5.2) Lauriston Castle: Contact provided

(5.3) Royal Overseas League: Contact provided

(5.4) City of Literature: www.cityofliterature.com

(5.5) RLS Day featured on the BBC news website (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-20324547>)

(5.6) and the *Guardian* photo galleries (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/gallery/2012/nov/13/robert-louis-stevenson>)

(5.7) and RLS was Guardian Picture of the Day: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/picture/2012/nov/13/photography-robert-louis-stevenson-picture-of-the-day>