

Impact template (REF3a)

<p>Institution: University of Worcester</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 29 - English Language and Literature</p>
<p>a. Context</p> <p>Non-academic impact and beneficiaries reflect the diversity and underpinning interdisciplinarity of the unit's work in the period, which included research in literary and cultural studies, film and media, and socio linguistics, addressing: American literature and culture; Shakespeare studies; children's literature; Restoration and 18th-century studies; Victorian studies; British film and cinema; folklore, horror cinema and exploitation films; ecocriticism; the sociology of language.</p> <p>Beneficiaries included: teachers and educationalists; children in formal and informal educational settings; adults interested in culture and the arts; professional theatre makers and critics involved with Shakespeare; music historians, writers on popular music and members of the general public with an interest in British and American roots music; interest groups promoting public access or dedicated to the enjoyment and understanding of film, literature and history; libraries and users of electronic library resources. Indirect benefit also accrued to organisations involved in tourism, visitor promotion and heritage preservation.</p> <p>Types of impact included: public access to new academic research and enhanced understanding of works and forms of media, literature and art in their contemporary contexts, and as present day texts; enhanced literacy skills and engagement with reading amongst children and young adults; new approaches to performing Shakespeare in translation; increased critical understanding of the media amongst young adults; enhanced access to literature, film and the arts; enhanced cultural engagement and experience amongst adults, with new opportunities to engage in close reading of literary and film texts and to understand the processes and practices of writers and film-makers; heritage preservation and public awareness/use of historic libraries; enhancement of the city of Worcester's cultural profile.</p> <p>Investment by the University of Worcester (UW) in a ground-breaking, multi award-winning £60M new academic/public library, The Hive, catalysed re-conception of how public impact might be derived from the unit's research/research expertise. Since opening in 2012, The Hive has provided a focus of activity for local communities and, longer term, provides the conditions for public dissemination/research application of potentially international reach and significance.</p>
<p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>Core to the unit's approach was establishment of collaborations with individuals/organisations working in non-academic contexts internationally, nationally and regionally. Dr Cinpoes' work on Shakespeare in translation is the subject of a case study focusing on impact in Romania, but international participation in the Craiova Shakespeare Festival extended impact to other countries – especially countries of the former eastern bloc: in Ukraine, contact with Cinpoes's work led a group of Shakespeare 'practitioners' to deploy translation as a mode of political dissidence following reinstatement of Russian as the national language; another group began documenting and archiving Shakespeare performances as part of a national history at risk of ideological erasure. In tandem with his research on Richard Hurd, Bishop of Worcester 1720-1808, Dr Mueller developed the Early Modern Research Group's (EMRG) collaboration with the Hartlebury Castle Preservation Trust, through partnership working with the Diocese of Worcester, to support the Trust's project of securing Hartlebury's endangered Hurd Library (Hurd's still intact, internationally significant, 18th century library). EMRG worked to raise the library's public profile (eg BBC Hereford & Worcester website, 9 April 2010) and, as a period expert, Mueller contributed a letter of support to the Trust's successful 2013 £414,000 Heritage Lottery Fund bid. EMRG members began electronic cataloguing of the library's holdings to improve general accessibility and usability and led an ongoing digitisation project to achieve an open access web resource which, once online, will benefit both general and academic users, internationally. Cinpoes led EMRG's collaboration with Worcester Cathedral Library: a UW Vacation Research Assistantship project (see REF5) enabled her work with a student researcher, in discussion with Cathedral librarian and EMRG associate member Dr David Morrison, to explore ways to promote public access to and knowledge of the Cathedral's holdings by means of thematic, digital presentation. The Library's blog has since adopted many of the approaches devised during the project. Cinpoes was also instrumental in</p>

Impact template (REF3a)

developing a wider UW/Cathedral partnership, one outcome of which was an annual public 'Worcester Lecture' held at the Cathedral and dedicated to issues of current societal import. A 2010 lecture by then HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, Dame Anne Owers, was followed (as a result of Cinpoes's input) by Prof Michael Dobson's 2011 lecture on *The public good and the voluntary sector: Shakespeare and the ethics of civic life*. (Lectures by Head of the Crown Prosecution Service, Keith Starmer QC, and Baroness Helena Kennedy QC, then followed).

The unit also achieved impact through media discussion/dissemination of its research activity, and expert contribution to non-specialist media coverage of relevant topics. Prof Webb was interviewed on Radio New Zealand's *Morning Report* about research conducted by The Hive on children's reading habits and tastes. The research was subsequently also discussed, quoting Webb, in Wales Online and The Daily Telegraph (both June 2012). Webb wrote a feature for London's Metro newspaper on contemporary nursery rhymes (July 2013) and provided advice to the Japanese company, TV Man Union, for a documentary film on Mary Norton's *The Borrowers* (June 2010). PGR Stenning discussed a Robert Frost poem on the BBC's *Country File* (May 2011). Dr Mitra's research on gender led to her involvement in discussions on BBC Hereford and Worcester radio (February 2011), BBC Radio Scotland (May 2013) and BBC Breakfast TV News (May 2013). Julie Maclusky's research with Dr Robyn Cox on teaching creative writing in primary schools (see impact case study) was the subject of a Worcester Evening News feature (25.10.11), as was Dr Terry's research and co-edited book on *Transatlantic Roots Music* (see REF5) (26.11.2012).

The unit provided specialist expertise to support the work of non-academic interest groups, aiming to improve access to cultural heritage and public engagement with literature and film. Mueller's support of Hartlebury Castle's development of its successful Heritage Lottery Fund bid is an example, as is Dr Koven's year-round programming of Worcester Arts Workshop's *Splendid Cinema* and his work as a Board member of the growing Worcestershire Film Festival (to which other members of the unit also contributed). Koven's involvement in a 2012 Heritage Lottery-funded project led by Worcestershire Volunteer Centre and Worcester Community Housing to prompt exchange between elderly and young people on their experiences and memories of film resulted in a documentary film directed by him, which opened the 2013 Festival. Dr Terry worked with the Malvern and Worcestershire Festivals to host public events at UW; Terry and Dr Arnold worked with Ledbury Poetry Festival, contributing programming ideas, securing UW sponsorship of international events (Michael McClure, 2010; Anna T Szabo/Andras Gerevich/George Szirtes, 2011; Kay Ryan, 2012; Eavan Boland, 2013) and, latterly, leading joint promotion of a very well attended public reading by performance poet, Patience Agbabi at The Hive, February 2013. Dr Mitra's bi-monthly 'café philosophique' staged at local venue, The Fold, enabled interested members of the public to explore philosophical ideas and critical concepts with academics.

The unit generated diverse public engagement activity in support of the creativity and cultural development of children and young people. Impact on formal teaching derived from Maclusky's research is discussed in an impact case study. Webb chaired the organising committee for UW's annual *Beeline Worcester Storytelling Festival for Children* which grew throughout the period, attracting some 3,000 Worcestershire and Herefordshire school children in 2013. Supported by PGRs and staff members attached to the International Forum for Research in Children's Literature (IFRCL) festivals brought internationally renowned story tellers and children's authors (Keving Crossley-Holland, Jan Ray, Maurice Gleitzman, Liz Pichon, Jacqueline Wilson, Michael Rosen, Anne Fine, Kit Wright et al) to Worcester, with many events latterly staged in association with The Hive. Webb also advised the 2011 and 2012 Woodstock Blenheim Palace Literary Festivals on work with its local secondary school, Marlborough School: she gave a talk on 'Children's Literature and War' to 150 pupils in 2011 and interviewed award-winning author and President of the School Library Association, Kevin Crossley-Holland for a large school audience in 2012. Rachel Ammonds provided media training for young people attached to Worcestershire County Cricket Club's youth academy, focussing on journalism's use of social media and interview techniques. Claire Wolfe supported development of young people's use of radio through her very active board membership of Youthcomm Radio.

The unit also worked to promote historical and contextual cultural awareness through disseminating new research in practice-focused, professional contexts and in broader public fora. Cinpoes's work contributed to this agenda (see case study) as did, for example, EMRG's

Impact template (REF3a)

organisation of St Swithun's Public Lectures in Worcester's 18th-century St Swithuns church: UW academics and invited guest scholars presented on topics of general interest and local relevance (eg early modern concepts of the devil; TV representations of the English Civil War). An open discussion followed each lecture providing opportunity to participate in an informed exchange of ideas.

Finally, when appropriate, the unit sought deliberately to 'blur boundaries' between the work of academic researchers and the interests of amateur scholars and enthusiasts: eg EMRG's promotion of events with the Battle of Worcester Society (whose Chair is an honorary member of EMRG) and Dr Terry's organisation of an evening of folk and blues music in collaboration with a local music promoter in 2009, closing the academic conference *Transatlantic Routes of American Roots Music* but also thrown open to the interested public.

c. Strategy and plans

UW's Strategic Plan 2013-18 identifies "arts, culture and heritage" as aspired "areas of distinction" within its work. Over the next period, maximising public dissemination and impact will be integral to the unit's development and to the work of EMRG, IFRCL and new, emerging research groups to which the unit will contribute. Available financial support within the Institute of Humanities & Creative Arts will be deployed actively to encourage and support researchers in this regard, and a programme of peer mentoring will aim to support colleagues' expertise and inventiveness in the non-academic application of their work. There will be renewed focus on developing national and international partnerships and networks for the purposes of intensifying impact, involving literary festivals, libraries and museums and galleries. Existing, collaborative partnerships with local institutions, organisations and community-based initiatives (eg Swan Theatre; Battle of Worcester Society; Worcester Arts Workshop; Worcester Cathedral; Ledbury Poetry Festival; Worcestershire Film Festival; Worcestershire Festival) will be sustained and intensified (eg EMRG's 2014 conference on 'Early Modern Memory', involving the active participation of the Battle of Worcester Society). Developing research in socio linguistics will offer new opportunities for public participation in research. Overtly interdisciplinary research (eg Webb's work with Dr Levene on exploring changing public policy on children's health in relation to changing literary representations of children's health) has the potential to lead to exhibitions and other forms of public dissemination. The unit will make full use of The Hive (see a. above) both as a means of engaging local communities with its work and as a venue able to contribute to international dissemination and impact.

d. Relationship to case studies

The case studies illustrate some core strategies for impact and exemplify unit approaches to 'knowledge transfer' in the period. Identified beneficiaries reflect the unit's understanding of some 'sectors' in which impact could best be derived - sectors that are likely to remain integral to more overt strategy over the next period (ie children and young people; educationalists and teachers; adults with an interest in literature, film and the arts; creative practitioners; libraries and professionals working to promote and inform public understanding of the arts and culture). Studies also exemplify the unit's aspiration to achieve impact of international reach and quality yet that also makes a meaningful contribution to the lives and cultural experiences of those who grow up, live and work in UW's immediate Worcestershire locale. Cinpoes's research and activity (her collaborative partnerships; her engagement with artists and arts organisations) benefited international public understanding of literature and art in relation to specific societal contexts and periods, addressing diverse publics across a broad age range, from school children to theatre professionals and critics. Maclusky's research and related activity supported local schools' work whilst also challenging the ways in which creative writing should be taught to primary-age children, internationally. With Dr Robyn Cox (now based in Australia) she proposed alternative conceptualisations of teaching (and, by extension, literacy education).