

Institution: University of Sussex

Unit of Assessment: UoA 29 English

1. Context

The main types of impact from research carried out by English at Sussex are:

- promoting new types of literary form;
- modes of performance and dramatic production;
- analysing language usage and language change;
- presenting and preserving cultural objects; and
- learning in higher education.

Our activities have an impact on civil society, cultural life, public discourse and education. They affect:

- students;
- educational institutions;
- poets and writers;
- readers of imaginative and critical writing;
- readers of journalism;
- radio listeners and television viewers;
- lexicographers and users of language blogs;
- medical practices and patients;
- theatres, directors and actors;
- churches;
- curators and arts centre administrators;
- administrators and trustees of country houses, especially The National Trust;
- the public who attend exhibitions in museums and art galleries; and
- cinema audiences.

Impact from The School of English is produced by its research centres and seminars:

- The Centre for Early Modern Studies (CEMS);
- The Centre for Visual Fields (CVF);
- The Centre for Sexual Dissidence (CSD); The Centre for Critical and Creative Thought (CCT); and
- The Centre for Modernist Studies (CMS).

Its seminars are:

- American Studies;
- English Language and Linguistics (ROLLS); and
- Literature of the long Nineteenth Century.

2. Approach to impact

Our approach to impact has been to focus on key areas: promoting new types of literary form; modes of performance and dramatic production; analysing language usage and language change; presenting and preserving cultural objects; learning in higher education. This has been achieved through 6 approaches:

- Partnerships that extend the work of cultural institutions;
- The establishment and promotion of creative writing, especially through innovative forms;
- Support to inventive aspects of performance;
- Using online tools to engage with readers, writers and linguists;
- Supporting public events and the promotion of public dialogue; and
- Publishing for audiences beyond the academy.

We support these six areas through the strategic appointment of staff and through financial and administrative support from the School's Research Committee.

Impact template (REF3a)

Partnerships

English's impact strategy over the past five years has been to identify a number of external partners outside HE that are closely related to our academic investigations in order to build long-term relationships that enhance better public engagement with our research.

- At Shakespeare's Globe Theatre we fund a PhD intern and faculty give lectures at pre-performance events, study-days and conferences;
- At the BFI, we have co-organised conferences and events;
- At Brighton's Duke of York Cinema we co-host a season of Queer Cinema;
- At the Brighton Museum we have co-curated exhibitions and organised symposia and lectures;
- At Petworth House we are developing their understanding of their early-modern archival materials and we have organised public events together;
- At Chichester Cathedral we are collaborating on an exhibition on early-modern Sussex; and
- At Myriad Editions, where we have a PhD intern, we have organised joint projects, including a web-based app for our pioneering Quick Fictions.

New forms of creative writing

English at Sussex has a long history of inspiring innovative forms of writing since Crozier and Josipovici started to publish in the 1970s. English works to influence contemporary creative writing and to increase an awareness of the importance of experimental writing. The case studies of Sutherland and Royle have developed out of these concerns, and we co-organise a number of public events (e.g. The First Fictions Festival 2012 and regular Quick Fictions events with Myriad, the annual Brighton Avant-Garde Poetry Festival with the Nightingale Theatre since 2009, and monthly HI Zero readings in Brighton along with poetic web publications, <http://hizeroreadings.tumblr.com/>) to link work in the University to a wider community.

- In 2008, the BBC's *Today* programme's review of avant-garde referred to 'the post-language poetry scene, around Keston Sutherland *et al.* in Sussex', see (http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_7802000/7802605.stm);
- Eckstein's own dramatisation of her first novel, *The Cloths of Heaven*, was the Woman's Hour Drama in March 2010 and her novel, *Interpreters*, won the People's Book Prize 2012–13;
- Salgado won the inaugural 2012 SI Leeds Literary Prize for unpublished work by Black and Asian women for her novel about Sri Lanka, *A Little Dust on the Eyes*, an attempt to perceive the world through the eyes of the marginalised <http://sileedsliteraryprize.wordpress.com/about-the-prize/> and she represented Sri Lanka (as a result of public nomination via the press and national media) at Poetry Parnassus, part of the 2012 Cultural Olympiad in London.

Support to innovative aspects of performance

Bailes has well-developed links to a number of theatre companies, including Elevator Repair Service and Forced Entertainment, and was creative advisor to The Special Guests, working to develop their challenging forms of practice. Eckstein's research in life writing and autobiography, part of our interest in Medical Humanities, has led her to develop widely disseminated dramatic productions and radio drama for the BBC, as well as organising SICK! with the Basement Theatre, Brighton in 2013: an international, cross-art-form festival that explored new ways of talking about and dealing with the experience of sickness of all kinds – physical, mental, ethical and spiritual. Eckstein's 'The Tuesday Group', an EU-funded production, staged in Brighton (2011), chronicles a succession of patients who meet weekly to voice their thoughts and share their experiences of living with a terminal diagnosis. Our AHRC-funded interns at the Globe (Altman, Harper) are working with their new indoor Jacobean theatre, advising on the relationship between stage and audience.

Using online media

Murphy's case study reflects our engagement with new technologies and modes of publication and dissemination. Martin Eve, now at Lincoln University, has furthered debate about Open Access publishing and he has developed a high profile online, disseminating ideas through his twitter account and blogs, national forums such as the British Academy website and his founding of The Open Library of the Humanities (Lebeau serves on its board).

Supporting public events

The First Fictions Festival (2012) attracted a wide audience to the University to hear speakers who included Ian Rankin, Jonathan Kemp and Suzi Feay. The annual Sussex Avant-Garde Poetry Festival (2009–) has also attracted significant audiences in Brighton to hear poets such as Julie Carr, Tom Leonard, Simon Jarvis and Tom Raworth. English regularly hosts screenings of films and public debates in Brighton and in London, notably at the BFI.

Publishing work for a general public

English has particular interests in developing popular forms of the novel and encouraging debate about its form. Ros Barber had her thesis published as a prize-winning verse novel, *The Marlowe Papers* (Sceptre 2012), attracting considerable press attention as a revival of the verse-novel form. Critical works developing out of our research have also been written for a wider audience. Boxall edited *1,001 Books You Must Read Before You Die* (2006: 5th edition, 2012), based on his research on the novel (he has been commissioned to write *Why The Novel Matters* for CUP), which generated lively public debates about the nature of the canon and what constitutes literary value. Our innovate Quick Fictions app is helping to disseminate a new energetic form of writing to a wide audience internationally (<http://www.myriadeditions.com/quickfictions>).

3. Strategy and plans

The School of English’s strategy going forward is to build on the six key approaches outlined above, and we have appointed a number of faculty in the REF period to develop our impact in the future, most significantly in Creative Writing, Drama, English Language and Sexual Dissidence (O’Connell, Price, Solomon, Stevens and Taylor). The Research Committee co-ordinates impact strategies and encourages faculty to consider public impact as part of their research, as well as identifying areas of potential strength and future directions that might be taken. All case studies have been supported by the RC, including travel funding and administrative support: e.g. Royle, an assistant to liaise with Myriad in the preparation of the app; Cummings, an assistant to support the Lambeth Palace exhibition.

In particular, we will continue to develop partnerships which enable us to approach impact not only as dissemination but as informing the nature of our research itself. This symbiosis will be enhanced with the opening of the University’s Attenborough Centre for the Creative Arts (ACCA) in 2014, providing both facilities and organisation that will enhance our reciprocal engagements with external organisations. Our grant awards will further extend such relationships – e.g. HEIF money to prepare exhibitions on early-modern Sussex and on gay lives in Brighton, and a KickStart Network grant with FutureHealth to explore the Humanities and healthcare policy. In addition, we will monitor and evaluate our impact work. The School gauges the nature of our interaction with the public through analysing audience figures, reviews, responses, blogs, tweets, articles and citations and develops ways to evaluate the success of impact achieved through relationship-building, and events and online activities.

4. Relationship to case studies

- Radical poetics: transforming poetry culture in the UK and beyond;
- Transforming the teaching of literary theory with creativity in higher education;
- Separated by a common language: changing understanding of language origins and use through public discourse; and
- Increasing public appreciation of the cultural significance of *The Book of Common Prayer*.

The first two cases have emerged from our well-established interest in critical and creative writing practices, and innovative modes of writing. The third case study is a direct result of our concern with the analysis of language and language use, to inform public understanding of language change and to think through the significance of the mass interaction of different language groups. This case study mainly uses online media to achieve its impact. The fourth case study has developed out of English’s long-standing interest in the relationship between literature and religion and a desire to influence the perception of religious culture and religious heritage in the English-speaking world.