

Institution: University of St Andrews

Unit of Assessment: 29 – English literature and language

a. Context

Early in the 1990s the poet Douglas Dunn was appointed Head of the School of English at St Andrews. He expanded the School significantly, and set about fashioning a community in which a new cohort of creative writers was actively incorporated within a thriving research culture, rather than working in isolation from scholarly colleagues. This integration of the critical and the creative has been central to many aspects of our work in the area of Impact, as can be seen from our case studies, which are all rooted in synergies effected between literary practice and scholarship.

The non-academic audience for our research includes those who work in the publishing industry, in broadcast and digital media, in the theatre, in arts organisations such as festivals, in the heritage and tourist industries, and in institutions such as museums and libraries. As our case studies indicate, our research has had a significant impact for all of these groups, including helping to generate very substantial economic benefit, running to several million pounds.

Beyond launching initiatives which aim to produce *financial* benefit, we also closely attend to the important *cultural* and *political* work that literature does, and historically has done, for Britain as a nation and as a colonial power, and the role that literature plays in the formation of devolved and diasporic identities. As researchers and writers we engage critically with these issues. Our work in this area is of clear importance to national and international public debates about politics and identity. We can instance our engagement in this area in, to take just two examples: **Crawford's** explorations of cultural constructions of Scottish identity in his scholarly work and in his poetry (of immediate significance at this particular point in Scottish history) and **Raychaudhuri's** explorations of (re)configurations of national identity in the wake of [territorial partition](#) (particularly in the case of India and Pakistan), disseminated through a variety of public events and platforms.

Our work also has a more dispersed form of Impact as it enters the general cultural field. A illustrative example here is our involvement in UNESCO's Edinburgh City of Literature 'Carry a Poem' initiative, which saw lines from Douglas Dunn's 'Disenchantments' ('Look to the living, love them, and hold on') [projected on to the Castle Rock](#) in Edinburgh on Valentine's Day 2010. The precise impact on those who witnessed this event is harder to quantify than, say, our contribution to generating tourist revenues, but the spirit of the initiative has been nicely caught by Robyn Marsack of the Scottish Poetry Library: 'We're used to thinking of poems as something we reserve for special occasions . . . But poetry doesn't have to be kept for best. The "Carry a Poem" reading campaign is about celebrating poems as an enriching, essential part of our everyday lives.' Part of our broader mission in seeking to make our work impactful is, in fact, precisely to bring the value of literary texts and cultural commentary into the lives of ordinary people: to enliven, inform, enrich, challenge, disrupt and rebalance the emotional and intellectual rhythms of everyday life. This work is rooted in the values fostered in the School by Dunn more than two decades ago, when he brought the creative and the critical into fruitful dialogue.

b. Approach to impact

A central element of our approach to Impact over several decades has been to extend the work of the School outward to embrace the local community, and communities beyond our immediate area. A prime example of this has been our longstanding involvement with [StAnza](#) – Scotland's only dedicated annual poetry festival. The St Andrews poetry festival was originally founded in 1986 by **Roe**, researcher in post throughout the assessment period, when it ran bi-annually. In 1998 the Festival effectively became a 'spin-out' organisation run by local townspeople, establishing itself as an annual event successfully drawing visitors into St Andrews during a low spot in the tourist season (the very reason its dates were moved from October to mid March in 2003). The organisation was given an office in the School during its early period of transition and has continuously received funding directly from the School (last year increased from £2000 to £3000 per annum). In 2003 StAnza became a charitable company limited by guarantee under a Board of Trustees, on which two colleagues in the School serve (**C. Jones** and **T. Jones**). StAnza regularly benefits from programme contributions (readings and public lectures) from School members,

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indirectly providing further revenue to the festival in the form of ticket sales. In return the School benefits from a platform at which its research can reach a non-specialist reading public. This is invaluable to the researcher in providing a forum where user feedback can be communicated informally and often at an early stage of the research. School contributions to StAnza programming over the years are too numerous to list; two of our case studies presented research at StAnza.

StAnza is not the only example of a long-term town-gown collaboration pursued by the School in advance of the impact agenda. In conjunction with the Wilhelmina Barns-Graham Charitable Trust, the School worked to establish, in 2011, an [International Writer's Residency](#), providing a £14,000 stipend for an overseas poet or novelist of international distinction to stay in St Andrews for a four-month period (the WBG provides free accommodation). The Artistic Director of StAnza sits on the selection committee for the Residency, ensuring that demonstrable benefit from the Residency accrues to the town as well as the University (the writer contributes to StAnza's programme). In 2013 the residency was taken up by award-winning Faber poet Emma Jones, from Australia.

Beyond these major initiatives, colleagues have long been encouraged to carry out public-facing activities. Mention of select examples taken from the assessment period indicates the breadth of the contribution made to the cultural life of the nation: **Burnside's** work features in a permanent poetry installation established at the London Velodrome for the 2012 Olympics; **Dillon** took part in a panel discussion with Raj Persaud at the Edinburgh Science Festival; **Lodge** wrote and presented a series on Edward Lear on Radio 3; **Murphy** contributed to [Sixty Minutes With Shakespeare](#), a website featuring writers and actors dedicated to countering the myth that Shakespeare did not write the plays attributed to him; **Sutton** was interviewed about Wagner for a BBC Radio 3 Proms intermission broadcast; **C. Jones** collaborated with an NHS palliative health care practitioner to run a workshop with cancer survivors, using the Douglas Dunn *Elegies* papers and manuscripts; **Stabler** appeared on BBC Radio 4's *In Our Time* discussing Byron; **Roe** serves as Chair of the Keats Foundation, Hampstead and is a trustee for the Wordsworth Trust at Dove Cottage.

We have long sought to harness our synergy of the writerly and the scholarly in order to maximise the impact of our research; we recognise that writers can attract new audiences for academic work and that academic work can inspire new writing to follow unexpected paths. It has been School policy for some time to pair newly appointed creative writers with academic mentors, partly to ensure that the kinds of conversations that might achieve those results can more readily take place. Two of our impact case studies were developed as a direct result this policy.

The organisation of colleagues into Research Groups since RAE2008 (see REF5) has also facilitated greater collaboration in the School, which has allowed colleagues to bring related individual projects into closer alignment in order to maximise impact. Our four impact case studies have naturally evolved out of our four research groups, with three of those projects benefitting from the input of other colleagues within the project's 'home' research group, and all four projects benefitting from collaborative involvement with the Creative Writing Research Group.

As the impact agenda has evolved over recent years, School policy over research support has evolved too; institutional leave sabbaticals are now granted to colleagues for projects that will generate impact as well as for traditional academic research, and personal research allowances can be used freely on developing impact as well as on meeting research costs. Two of our case studies were developed with institutional leave, and research allowance money was used in three cases. One of our case studies accessed the University's Sloan Fund for 'seedcorn' development.

Relationships with publishers, festival organisers, broadcasters, journalists and arts organisations emerge out of individual contacts and networking, as is standard in creative industries. Colleagues share these contacts with each other, and opportunities to pursue projects that enhance the impact of our research tend to arise out of these networks and on the back of previous projects.

A role of Publicity Officer exists in the School, maintaining a news page aimed at the wider public (<http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/english/newsandevents/>). She works closely with the University Press Office in bringing our research to the attention of non-specialists wherever possible.

c. Strategy and plans

Recognising the strengths that writers can bring to the impact of our research, the School has begun a strategy when hiring creative writers of seeking to appoint applicants with particular

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strengths in performative forms of writing and literary engagement with the public: playwrights **Harris** and **Emmanuel**, both with extensive TV and Radio experience, are obvious examples, but poet **Polley** came with previous experience of community-based installation projects that clearly had potential for us; in fact **Polley's** expertise in this area became instrumental to one of our case studies. The School will continue to follow this strategy whenever it has the opportunity.

In addition to maintaining this recent practice, the School will, within the next REF cycle, implement several new strategies in order to enhance its impact delivery. The successful implementation of these strategies constitute our **goals** for the next assessment cycle. These are:

- 1) *Seedcorn funding for developing impact, found to be of key importance to developing 'The Bard', will be made available regularly and in a co-ordinated way. £2,000 per annum will be committed from the School's operational budget to provide funding for impactful projects.*
- 2) *The School will initiate a formal programme of inviting staff from publishing, broadcasting, museums and galleries, and the creative industries generally, to speak to colleagues and PGRs to discuss ways in which the fruits of our research can serve as a springboard for impact activities. In particular, informal 'meet and greet' networking opportunities will be set up between PGRs and these visitors.*
- 3) *The School will establish a formal link with secondary schools in the local area. Heads of English at Fife schools will be invited to St Andrews and consulted on what help – including the preparation of materials – the School can provide for their advanced pupils. Any materials produced will also be made more widely available through the School's website.*
- 4) *The School administrative role of Director of Research will be split, with the creation of an Impact Officer, reporting to the Director of Research, whose role will be redefined as a result. The Impact Officer will be responsible for administering the seedcorn funding mentioned at (1), for running the two user liaison programmes mentioned at (2) & (3), and for collecting, developing, and coordinating web-based materials directed at non-academic users. These will be maintained as legacy resources for research projects featured on the School's website: <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/english/research/featuredprojects/>*

d. Relationship to case studies

Each of our case studies outlines several different types of impact, usually including economic as well as cultural benefit, and each engages with several of the user-groups outlined in 'context'.

All of our case studies have their origins in one of our four newly created Research Groups, often capitalising on the collaborative opportunities provided within and between these groups, yet each case study also exemplifies the ethos expressed above of marrying the scholarly and the creative in some way. Thus 'The Bard' emerges out of solid historical and archival work conducted within the Eighteenth-century, Romantic and Victorian Research Group (RG), yet it is extended with new writing compositions in Scots, both by Crawford and by his colleagues in the Creative Writing group. 'Vanessa and Virginia' originated in scholarly editorial research carried out by the Modern and Contemporary RG, yet its impact was developed by Sellers writing prose fiction, an example of the flexibility of our staffing structure in which academic colleagues are freely encouraged to work on creative writing projects. 'Shakespeare's Sonnets in the Digital Age' was developed primarily by a colleague from the Creative Writing RG, but he did so with assistance and advice from a colleague based firmly in the Medieval and Renaissance RG. Conversely 'Re-making Medieval Poetry in the Modern World' began with research in the Medieval and Renaissance RG, but was developed with crucial collaboration from a colleague from the Creative Writing RG.

The success of our policy of setting up writer-scholar mentorship pairs is evident in 'Shakespeare's Sonnets', the fruit of Paterson being mentored by Renaissance specialist Rhodes, and 'Medieval Poetry in the Modern World', the result of Polley being mentored by medievalist Jones. 'The Bard' also benefitted from seed-corn funding from the Sloan Fund, a measure so crucial to its development that it resulted in the newly formalised strategy of seedcorn funding described above. Both 'The Bard' and 'Vanessa and Virginia' were developed using institutional leave sabbaticals and they and 'Re-making Medieval Poetry in the Modern World' benefitted from access to personal research allowances.