**Institution:** University of the West of England, Bristol

**Unit of Assessment:** 36 - Communication, Cultural and Media Studies

## a. Context

The Unit is distinguished by its commitment to collaborative and culturally engaged methods, ensuring that its research enacts impact through a network of well established stakeholder relationships. Research is oriented to social, cultural and economic benefit with industry and community stakeholder organisations, and an engagement with policy inquiry and public debate. The Unit's integration within creative networks is led by the Digital Cultures Research Centre (DCRC), which has pioneered knowledge exchange (KE) and impact-oriented project design, and co-creative research methodologies centred on practice-led collaborations with creative industry business partners. From 2011 these were broadened via the UWE-based Research and Enterprise in Arts and Creative Technology AHRC KE Hub (REACT). Research Groups engage in specific KE activities with particular stakeholders and take part in a range of public engagements.

## b. Approach to impact

The Unit works with industry, community, education and regional development collaborators to devise co-creative research practices founded on the convergence of academic and stakeholder interests. It draws on cultural research methodologies (ethnographic, policy-attuned and practice-led, linked to historical, theoretical and aesthetic concerns) to provide an agile and responsive research agenda.

**DCRC**'s founding partnership with Watershed's regional and national digital media development, the Pervasive Media Studio (PMS), allows it to provide a city centre research innovation lab and testbed for creative industry. The partnership is built on knowledge sharing: weekly DCRC/PMS open lunchtime work-in-progress seminars enable staff to understand the wider applications of their research. DCRC co-productions with creative sector SMEs and micro-businesses created economic and social value by fostering innovation in pervasive media and games design (Case Study 1) and enhanced understanding of user experiences in the heritage sector (Case Study 2).

To develop a sustainable network of collaborators DCRC has become a key node in the national and regional 'ecosystem' of digital media development based on collaborative research relationships with public interest bodies (e.g. BBC, NESTA, Bristol City Council, Knowle West Media Centre) and commercial enterprises from large scale (Hewlett Packard) to SME (Mobile Pie, Thought Den, Calvium) and micro businesses (Simon Games, Splash & Ripple, Interactive Places). DCRC Director **Rose**, formerly Head of New Media BBC Wales, took up an AHRC Fellowship in 2010, her findings now used to advise industry on the use of co-creation and interactivity to enhance documentary content (BBC Future Factual summit 2012; BBC Connected Studio CPD Event 2013). **Rose's** work contributes to the DCRC's i-Docs research grouping: established by DCRC researchers Aston, **Dovey** and Visiting Fellow Gaudenzi in 2011. The i-Docs Symposium, website and Facebook community provide a unique KE resource which supports a growing international community of researchers and practitioners. DCRC is lead sponsor for Bristol Games Hub (2013-), with **Crogan** a member of the Advisory Board. **Dovey** and ex-UWE researcher Kennedy were instrumental in the formation of the Digital Games Research Association that gave the Unit's games research impact international reach. Embedding PGR students in partnerships, projects and events contributes to a sustainable research culture: e.g. a GWR PhD award was co-funded by local games production company Fluffy Logic, a partnership that led to the Unit's co-development of the Bristol Games Hub. Games-oriented PhD research is now based at the Hub and draws on its networks of industry and user intelligence. In collaboration with South West Screen's *iFeatures* film production scheme, another PGR student is investigating social media marketing techniques for independent film. As well as partnership-based project development, DCRC invests in research dissemination, engagement events and research user evaluations. Collab Docs, iDocs Blogs and the online Pervasive Media Cookbook ensure DCRC's research is promoted to a wide range of creative industry, community and arts stakeholders.

DCRC research promotes cultural enrichment and civic association as components of citizenship through research into the creative use of online technologies to strengthen community networks. Three projects led by **Dovey** were funded under AHRC's Connected Communities scheme, to explore 'creative citizenship': (i) a collaboration with Bristol's Knowle West Media Centre (KWMC) on the *Keeping in Touch* project, investigating how to access and use digital media, led to a 'digital

inclusion' handbook adopted by KWMC; (ii) the *Measuring Value Networks* project with Watershed produced the first iteration of a multi-criteria method for cultural organisations to assess the value of their work; this has been tested by National Theatre of Wales, Battersea Arts Centre, and Arnolfini; (iii) a collaboration with South Blessed Media in Bristol's St Pauls, to devise a talent development process to support long-term sustainability of creative enterprises; through the involvement of its partners Ofcom and NESTA, this collaboration will influence cultural policy.

The success of the DCRC KE model led to the establishment of REACT in 2011, which is underpinned by DCRC's Cultural Value research and a 'sandbox' approach to co-creation that combines academic and creative partners in an intensive period of project prototyping to deliver commercial, educational and social benefit.  Funding calls respond to the needs of creative industries through a Cultural Industry Advisory Board. Directed by **Dovey** and implemented by DCRC Visiting Professor Clare Reddington (0.25), it has led the investment of £1.2m in 30 digital prototypes that develop research with community education partners; worked with 20 creative businesses and other agencies; and produced 30 projects that prototype innovative digital media using research from the five partner Universities.  It has generated more than 180 original proposals, hosted meetings for 700 researchers and creative industry partners, embedded 20 research students or Early Career Research staff in projects, and enabled various teams to secure further investment through the producers' post award support scheme.

Research on digital media, film and cultural heritage has made an impact through its influence on media industry development and governance through an engagement with bodies such as the Department of Culture Media and Sport, Ofcom, NESTA and Creative England, and through the Unit's games industry networks.  The interface between new techniques for delivering cultural content and the social, economic and educational benefit of preserving and presenting heritage and cultural narratives of place is evident in **Crofts** practice-led research (Case Study 2) on cinema exhibition and the experience of cinema-going as collective memory and intangible heritage. Through the development of the Curzon Memories App and Projection Hero installation, in collaboration with Calvium Ltd and Bristol City Council, her research helps sustain local cinemas, preserving historical memories for the benefit of the community and contributing to the marketing of Bristol. **Henning**'s research on the practices and publics of museums and archives led to her participating in the design-phase of the new Museum of Bristol, M-Shed, becoming a member of the Bristol Museums' Academic Advisory Board in 2008.  Her 2008-9 AHRC-funded research workshop series *Rethinking Archives: History, Media, Memory* at Arnolfini, brought together artists, academics and archivists to consider new practices. She founded Bristol Music Research (BLIMA) a research platform for Bristol's Live Independent Music scene from 1950 to the present, acting as consultant for M-Shed and British Music Experience, London. **Henning,** alongside DJs, producers, musicians, writers and other researchers was invited to participate in the Ten-Cities international project organized by Goethe-Institut Nairobi to examine the communities and public spheres of club culture in everyday life. The outcomes influenced policy and resource allocation initiatives in the development of electronic music and networked culture (2013).

The Unit contributes to the expansion of voices in public debate and cultural life through:
(**i**) the influence of research on women and ageing on activist networks and public life.  **Dolan** and **Tincknell**'s research on the representation of gender in popular culture led them to co-found the Women, Ageing, Media (WAM) network on the representation of older women, with colleagues in the Universities of Gloucestershire and York in 2007. An AHRC Research Network grant (£23k) enabled WAM to organise an international conference (2008) and a symposium (2011) bringing together researchers and activists. WAM is part of the European Network of Aging Studies (ENAS) for which **Dolan** is a founder member and expert advisor.  ENAS was awarded €68,900 by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research for *Live to Be a Hundred: Cultural Narratives of Longevity.* **Dolan** is also an advisor to the newly inaugurated North American Network in Aging Studies.  Following their written submission to the Labour Commission on Older Women and the Media, **Dolan** and **Tincknell** were invited to contribute to a public policy round table discussion: 'Older Women in Public Life' at the House of Commons, and their evidence was used to inform the arguments presented in The Commission's Interim Report (2013: pp. 31-2; 54).
(**ii**) enhancing public debate through the dissemination of research and practice-based innovation

to the public, and to documentary and radical film practitioner networks. The Film and Television Research Group collaborates with Arnolfini and Watershed giving public talks and organising a series of monthly public lectures and Film Club Bristol screenings, as well as public lectures on film in the UK, Canada and Australia (**Bould**). The Group's researchers serve on advisory boards for *Afrika Eye* and *Encounters International Short Film and Animation* festivals and the peripatetic *Compass International Film Festival*, which takes popular world cinema into some of Bristol's least privileged communities. **Oldham**'s *Bristol Bike Project* was screened in nearly 50% of schools throughout the Czech Republic and Slovakia and People in Need screened the film at over 70 schools throughout Georgia and Armenia. **Oldham**'s *Bonnington Square* was screened at the Neighbourhood Renewal Conference at the University of Westminster and as part of the South Bank Festival of Neighbourhood at the Royal Festival Hall (2013).

(**iii**) policy-oriented research directed to initiatives designed to increase debate about and participation in local news. Jones' (UWE to 5/2013) research on user-generated content in participatory digital contexts influenced partnerships between BBC Bristol and community media networks and companies; a key outcome was the provision of training opportunities for volunteer journalists (Case Study 3). A partnership with **MediaWise**, a journalism ethics charity hosted by UWE since 2006, enables the Unit to influence public debate and inform policy-making bodies and government inquiries into media accountability, improving citizen dialogue and activism. Its Director Mike Jempson, Senior Lecturer in Journalism, contributed information to the Leveson enquiry (2013) and was UK lead on an EU-funded comparative research project, 'Media Accountability and Transparency in Europe', across 12 European and 2 Arab states. Its final report (2013) influenced EU policy in regard to self-regulation, media pluralism and citizen participation.

### c. Strategy and plans

The University's mission statement aims to achieve user-led research with application to real world problems. The Unit's core future aim is to embed impact into all aspects of research. DCRC's Creative Value research and REACT projects pioneer methodologies for articulating, evaluating and generating evidence of impact, which will be shared with other research teams. Impact Case Studies will be used as exemplar material to promote methodological innovation through workshop and mentoring initiatives, supported by the Research Business and Innovation Unit. PGR students will be encouraged to identify the potential impact of their research through the Vitae framework.

DCRC's impact strategy will draw on an evolving set of methodologies for addressing the future digital media ecology. Themes driving the next stage of DCRC's research are Interactive Documentary, the Playable City, Digital Citizenship and Participatory Design. **Rose**'s i-Docs ARHC Research Network (2014-15) will highlight new business and revenue models for documentary producers, journalists and photographers to distribute work through the internet, enhancing commercial benefits and customer reach through interactive production strategies. **Crogan**'s AHRC Creative Territories Games Research network (2014-15) will share intelligence on hub strategies for innovation and examine the economics of the Playable City: how co-location, shared expertise and small-scale networks can contribute to the future growth of the digital economy and enhanced citizen participation. **Crofts** will lead on Participatory Design partnerships to extend Playable City and Digital Citizenship impact strands. From 2014, a new Centre for Cultural Research will broaden the Unit's research on cultural production, value and policy building on the co-creation expertise of DCRC and REACT. With funding to December 2015, REACT's legacy strategy (2014-) is to broker overseas collaborations by taking its work to international audiences. It has been asked by British Council to co-produce the UnBox Innovation Festival on the Indian subcontinent and by AHRC to present to the Shanghai Innovation Network (2014).

### d. Relationship to case studies

**Case Study 1** reflects DCRC's aim to deliver benefit to a range of stakeholders across civic and creative economy regional networks. This exemplifies the 'co-creation for innovation' approach of DCRC, producing economic benefit and industry innovation, using pervasive media methodologies.
**Case Study 2** emerged from the co-creative approach fostered by DCRC and the 'sandbox' processes taken up by REACT. Its emphasis on cultural memory, history and heritage as the basis of public participation and interactive uses of media is developed through innovative uses of locative media for experience design, exploring the social benefit of interactive storytelling.
**Case Study 3** emerged from research by Jones on citizen journalism while at UWE (to 6/2013) with impact exemplifying the Unit's aim to combine social benefit with industry sustainability.