

Portfolios 'Beyond Text'

Anne Boddington, Maria Delgado and Simon McVeigh

A discussion paper presented at the seminar Evidencing Research and Impact in Arts & Humanities Practice (Wellcome Collection, 3 February 2017)

Keywords: Research, Open Access, Creative Knowledge, Innovation, Application

This paper proposes the development of a UK-wide digital 'rich-media' portfolio framework for the documentation, evaluation, assessment and archiving of creative and interdisciplinary research and the evidence of its impact. Its immediate imperative is to significantly reduce individual institutional and governmental cost and workload, and augment the capacity, capability and visibility of a future UKRI to enhance the UK's world-leading reputation in research and innovation.

The production and development of interdisciplinary research, creating new insights and pathways to impact, requires the integration of intellectual, affective and practice-based activities as demonstrated by the AHRC's [Cultural Value Project](#). It may also assist with rich-media forms of representation and archival structures that clearly articulate the significance, originality and rigour of the research within 'bodies of work' as defined by REF 2014 and developed in Lord Stern's Review of the Research Excellence Framework [Building on Success and Learning from Experience](#).

To meet the definition of research all publicly funded research outputs are subject to the various requirements of Open Access, ensuring that the research is searchable and accessible and can be developed across subject boundaries and beyond textual description. Equally the recent emergence of impact measures requires evidence of that impact in the context of the research.

Introduction

Although most closely associated with the visual and performing arts, architecture, design, craft and media (or more broadly any subject that deploys and produces ‘narrative or creative knowledge’) many subjects - including those in medicine and health and the physical and social sciences - increasingly utilise a diverse range of media and forms of experience and expression to advance their research.

Capturing the output and outcomes of these ‘expanded methods’ presents a continual challenge for business and industry, for central and local government, as well as for educational and research institutions, particularly in relation to the integration and application of policy and practice. Similarly, identifying, developing and promoting new and emergent fields and interdisciplinary research outputs remains a significant challenge for researchers and organisations, and generates significant additional cost and workload in locating appropriate expertise.

This paper outlines the intellectual and economic imperatives and challenges of systematically capturing and archiving the scale of research endeavour in universities and other specialist HEIs across the UK and internationally. Currently this is in part constrained by its predominantly textual presentation and the limits of capturing and archiving the best affective, creative and practice-based research which are becoming increasingly vital in developing and facilitating political, economic, social and cultural change.

The turmoil of 2016 served as a sharp reminder of the importance of engagement and application and of the need to develop skills and knowledge that enable new generations of innovative and creative researchers and scholars to build on existing creative knowledge.

Economically the UK infrastructure for research undertaken in HEIs is governed by the dual funding system, to be reshaped and refined in parallel with the formation of UKRI.

This project is designed to reduce cost and administrative burden to submitting HEIs for REF 2021 and to underpin the formation of UKRI, through the reshaping of RCUK, HEFCE and Innovate UK. Although led by Arts & Humanities, its benefits will augment and make more accessible all forms of research, and arguably create effective data sources to enhance later subject-based iterations of TEF. The project builds on learning from REF 2014 (Panel D Report, p.86) and RAE 2008 (Panel D, p.99), and also on the findings from the AHRC’s Cultural Value Project, the Nurse and Stern reviews of RCUK and REF 2014 respectively. It also aims to inform HEFCE’s current sector [consultation for REF 2021](#).

Proposal

Built on development work undertaken by a small and informal group of HEIs including Brighton, Goldsmiths (UoL), Slade (UoL), Central School of Speech and Drama (UoL), Birmingham City University and Glasgow School of Art (e.g. Matthew Yee-King at Goldsmiths, <https://vimeo.com/187025628>), the project proposes the development of a digital 'rich-media portfolio framework' capable of capturing research and/or impact (where appropriate) and 'bodies of work' that require additional knowledge fields in order to create an accessible, rigorous articulation of creative research. Current HEI repositories (Pure, Converis, E-Prints etc.) or RCUK's ResearchFish do not currently offer this facility, so inadvertently creating a representation of UK Arts & Humanities research that is primarily textual and that obscures the considerable research contribution of significant sections of the visual and performing arts, architecture, design and media communities. Resolving this challenge for the UK would also, by default, provide additional creative means for articulating medical, physical and social science research to broader audiences. Such a tool could also be invaluable to augment advancements in interdisciplinary research, that not only help to bridge C.P. Snow's persistent 'two cultures' but that will also reveal and support [The Hidden Story](#) (AHRC/University Alliance Project) and the value and expertise currently obscured through its lack of articulation and visibility.

Although initiated through the research imperatives of the arts and humanities, the importance of this proposal is that its goals potentially extend to all forms of scientific (denotative) and creative knowledge. Its aim is to signal the intellectual and economic imperative and to capture the value, reach and significance of the UK's research and impact and to disseminate this internationally, for the benefit of government agencies, higher education institutions and to enhance its public accessibility, such that it transcends discipline, language and text.

All HEIs that conduct scientific, applied and creative research that utilize visual methods grapple with the challenges of its representation and subsequently invest considerable resource in attempting to resolve it independently or in small groups because of the absence of any shared system. This project aims to develop and provide a portfolio framework that can be adopted by RCUK, REF 2021 and by individual HEIs such that they can plan and gather data systematically and ensure that REF 2021 can play an invaluable part in initiating and presenting rich and rigorous data sources that more fully represent the UK's research capacity and capability, but that can be managed locally by individual HEIs and public organisations and presented in a number of different public formats (e.g. HEI websites, REF2021, Arts

Council, Crafts Council and Design Council, Professional Bodies), and to UKRI when submitting applications for funding for new awards.

Creating a single interface to accommodate these needs and that is endorsed, sustainable and not tied to a specific repository product would be advantageous for many subject communities in the long term, but also advance the UK as a leader in research infrastructures. Although there have been a number of attempts to develop such systems internationally, the existing ones do not articulate the research imperatives and rigour of the UK's current systems, but do offer models from which to learn, e.g. [JAR online](#). This project could also provide a framework and guidance on articulating the research imperatives and might therefore also serve to aid the practice sectors by providing clearer indications as to the anticipated composition of research portfolios.

Anne Boddington
Maria Delgado
Simon McVeigh

January 2017