

# Networks

Issue 07  
Summer 2009

**Don't Mention the 'C-word'**  
Mark Readman examines the rhetorics  
of creativity

**The Creative Curriculum**  
Tools for stimulating students' imagination

# Welcome to the seventh issue of *Networks*, the magazine of the Art Design Media Subject Centre (ADM-HEA)

As Mark Readman tells us in his feature article 'creativity in education is almost universally acknowledged to be a positive, desirable thing...but even in the field of Art, Design and Media there is considerable disagreement about what this 'thing' might be.'

Varying conceptions are also apparent in this issue of *Networks* where three of the feature articles explicitly address the theme of 'creativity' and the 'creative curriculum'. Mark Readman analyses the rhetorics of creativity in *Nurturing Creativity in Young People*, the 2006 report compiled by Paul Roberts. The author highlights the diverse agendas to which the concept is attached and confusion about how, why, and whether it can and should be nurtured and taught, advising a 'more sceptical...more explicit' approach to 'the C-word'.

Nik Mahon and Tim McClellan conceptualise creativity in similar ways considering learning and teaching practices that can help students to 'view the problem with fresh eyes', 'shift outside their comfort zone' and 'try new approaches' in their practice. Nik Mahon discusses tools for the stimulation of creative thinking in the context of advertising higher education and industry, specifically the potential 'value of ambiguity as a trigger for the imagination and ideation'. Tim McClellan argues for 'the power of the sound medium' to assist in the development of students' creative faculties across art, design and media disciplines.

This issue also contains the paper awarded this year's ADM-HEA Media, Communications and Cultural Studies Prize. Niall Brennan, Mehita Iqani and Frédérik Lesage's paper describes and critically evaluates an inventive solution to simultaneously enhance doctoral students' teaching practice alongside experiential learning opportunities for Masters level Media and Communications students.

The theme of 'creativity' also runs through many of the learning and teaching projects reporting in this issue. For example, we encounter research exploring the use and effectiveness of e-portfolios in showcasing students' creative outputs, research examining conceptions of Skills for Creativity in Games Design, as well as research employing a range of 'creative' methodologies. These, and the interim reports from the ADM-HEA funded projects for 2008-9, highlight research, teaching and learning interventions that may challenge us to step outside of our own comfort zones and approach our teaching practices with 'fresh eyes'.

The ADM-HEA team



# 1 ADM-HEA News

## SPACE: ADM-HEA Annual Forum 2009

// In recent years, ideas about 'learning spaces' in higher education have changed to encompass areas beyond our traditional seminar rooms, studios and lecture theatres and include any environment in which learning takes place. Part of this process has been the recognition of the potential role of new technologies and the impact of these on student learning opportunities. Large numbers of students, widening participation and the limitations of built environments all contribute to a need to examine the best ways of meeting students' needs.

This year, the ADM-HEA Annual Forum, SPACE, will explore the theme of 'learning spaces' in art, design and media higher education and will provide opportunities for both 'virtual' and 'vital' participation. Steven Heppell, Professor of Media at the Centre of Excellence in Media Practice at Bournemouth University, will launch our online discussion forum, Virtual SPACE, with a video presentation on 29 April. The online forum will provide opportunities for an unlimited number of participants to engage with, and share ideas about, the theme – as well as informing, and interacting with, subsequent discussion at our 'Vital Space' event at the Wales Millennium Centre (WMC) in Cardiff on 8 May.

Participants at Vital SPACE at WMC will work in six groups to develop key topics identified in the online forum and these 'real-time' discussions will be reported to the online forum so that off-site participants can continue to interact with debates in Wales.

In the afternoon, groups will make a 60-second movie summarising their discussions. The movies will be screened and posted online and a panel discussion with contributions from vital and virtual delegates including Prof. Steven Heppell, Dr. Jos Boys, Dr. Julia Gaimster, will close Vital SPACE at the WMC.

We hope that activities will be recorded using the technology in your pocket, so bring your mobile phones and PDAs!

Virtual SPACE will remain open until 13 May; until then delegates will be able to continue their discussions and contribute feedback. Professor Steven Heppell will formally close proceedings with his reflections on the issues raised and what these might mean for learning spaces in art, design and media higher education.

More information including detailed programmes, referrals to resources and registration information can be found at <http://www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk/news/subject-centre-news/space-adm-hea-annual-forum-2009>

ADM-HEA would like to thank the Centre of Excellence in Media Practice at Bournemouth University. In particular we would like to thank the CEMP Director, Jon Wardle and Professor Stephen Heppell for their help in designing SPACE.

### Useful information can be found at:

CEMP: <http://www.cemp.ac.uk/>  
Professor Steven Heppell's web site: <http://www.heppell.net>

Designing spaces for effective learning:  
[http://www.jisc.ac.uk/eli\\_learningspaces.html](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/eli_learningspaces.html)

### Other learning space resources:

<http://www.learningspaces.net>  
<http://www.futurelab.org.uk>

<http://cetld.brighton.ac.uk/projects/current-projects/learning-spaces>

## Art Design Media Teaching Fellowship Scheme (ADMTFS) 2009-10

// February this year saw the launch of the second year of this ADM-HEA scheme that aims to recognise, reward and develop innovative teaching in art, design and media subjects. The scheme is part of ADM-HEA's strategy to support the professional development and recognition of staff in HE and to ensure that their teaching is valued and rewarded. The scheme also provides opportunities for linking to the UK Professional Standards Framework.

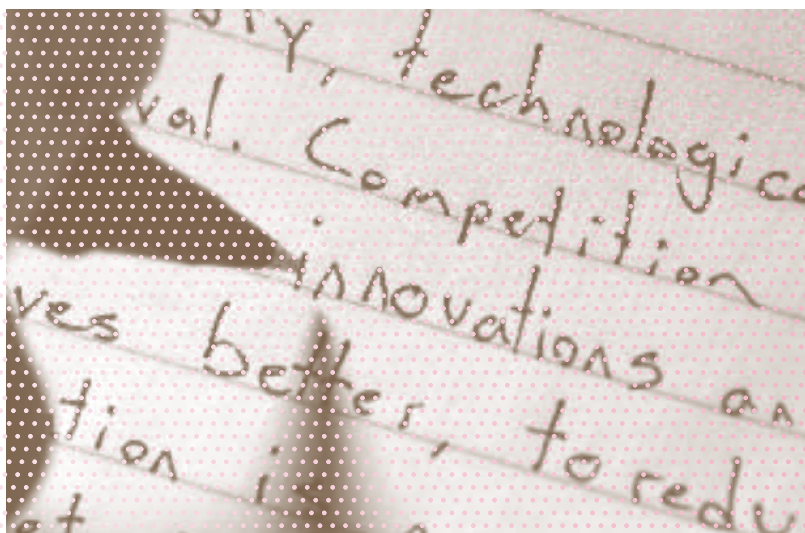
A particular focus of this award is on studio-based teaching staff that have previously been under-represented in institutional or national award schemes. In this context, studio-based teaching may include: museums, labs and field work in a specified creative practice context.

Nominees were asked to demonstrate innovative teaching by providing evidence of achievement in teaching and support of student learning. Evidence of effective teaching was invited in a range of formats including film, video and audio files. We also requested an outline of a project proposal, which further developed innovative practice.

The ADMTFS' strength is that it recognises the diversity of the staff who support student learning in art, design and media subjects and how crucial individual teachers are in the support and enhancement of the student learning experience. The deadline for applications was 30 March and details of the successful fellows will be announced on our website in July. Further information about the proposed projects will be published in the next issue of *Networks* in September. For more information visit

: <http://www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk/awards/art-design-media-teaching-fellowship>

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/policy/work>



## Learning Spaces – contributions invited

// **SPACE**, this year's ADM-HEA Annual Forum, is due to take place at the Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff on 8 May, 2009 (see page 1). The theme of this event is 'learning spaces' and this will be carried through into the next issue of *Networks* to be published in September 2009.

Perhaps you have researched or carried out a development project in this area, instituted a new learning environment within your institution or recently attended an event relating to the theme? Why not share your knowledge, experience and opinions with colleagues across the art, design and media sector? You can contribute by submitting items for the following sections:-

**Events** – Analytical / evaluative reports on events you have attended as a delegate or participant either in the UK or overseas which are likely to interest ADM colleagues. Reports should be up to 300 words.

**Feature Articles** – Choose a topic that relates to your own experience and/or research. Some very general ideas for feature article topics are: the impact of national and regional policy agendas; institutional strategies; new technological developments on art, design, and media higher education. For full guidelines visit: <http://www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/features/how-to-submit-a-feature-article>. A fee of £300 is payable for accepted submissions. Feature articles are between 2,000 and 2,500 words.

**Projects** – Evaluative reports relating to pedagogic research and/or development projects of interest to the ADM sector. These items can be up to 2,000 words.

**Reviews** – we welcome the review of any of the resources currently displayed on our website at: <http://www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/resource-reviews-items-currently-available-for-review>. Alternatively, if you know of a resource, be it a book, website, CD, etc., relating to 'learning spaces' which you have found particularly valuable to your teaching practice and would like to share with colleagues, please contact us with full details. A fee of £50 is payable for submissions and contributors may keep the resource reviewed. Reviews should be 800 – 1,200 words in length.

Please send items electronically to Alison Crowe: [a.d.crowe@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:a.d.crowe@brighton.ac.uk) by **10 July, 2009**.

If you are not able to submit an item on this occasion, there will be future opportunities to do so. For more information on themes and deadlines visit:

<http://www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/features/how-to-submit-a-feature-article>.

## Student Writing Competition

// **For our student award this year we asked learners to submit a piece of creative / critical writing exploring the theme of 'learning spaces' in art / design / media higher education.**

In previous years we have asked for essay submissions; this year, inspired partly by the HEFCE Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning Project, Writing PAD, we adjusted submission requirements and assessment criteria hoping to receive writing in a broad range of styles and formats and reflecting the diversity of writing practices across art, design and media subjects.

The closing date for entries was 27 March and we are now looking forward to learning about students' interpretations and experiences of, and perspectives on, the theme and hope that these will feed in to discussions at this year's annual forum.

We will be publishing all submissions that meet the criteria online, and the winning submission will be published in the next issue of *Networks*.

For more information about the writing competition: <http://www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk/awards/student-essay-competition/2009-student-writing-competition>

For more information about Writing PAD: <http://www.writing-pad.ac.uk/>

# 2 Sector News

## Creative Interventions: student experiences of the public and third sectors

// In July 2008, the University of the Arts London, the Arts Institute at Bournemouth and the Surrey Centre for Excellence in Professional Training and Education (SCEPTRE) at the University of Surrey were awarded Higher Education Academy National Teaching Fellowship Scheme project funding for the Creative Interventions project.

The project is examining creative arts students' learning experiences specifically gained via work-related activity in public and third sector environments. The focus is on how such experiences contribute to students' employability and creative skills; how these are identified by students and tutors; and how they are currently valued and assessed. It will identify the best ways to recognise and value the rich and diverse experiences provided by both curricular-based arts learning and work-related learning in the public and third sectors. It will also test the assumption that the creative attributes that arts students gain through their course-based learning experiences transfer into public and third sector professional settings.

### Research methodology

Three online questionnaires (to students, staff and employers)

- Case studies
- Literature review
- Questionnaires

Do you have interesting examples of students learning through voluntary work or projects/placements with not-for-profit organisations?

The questionnaires aim to provide a snapshot of practice and different perceptions of public/third sector work-related learning experiences.

Please contribute your views by:

1. completing the STAFF questionnaire
2. and/or distributing the STUDENT questionnaire

These can be found on the project wiki: <http://creativeinterventions.pbwiki.com>

### Case studies

The project team are looking for interesting examples of course based and extra-curricular work-related learning activities to investigate in more depth (e.g. projects, work placement schemes, course units). ALL work-related learning within the public or third sectors is potentially of interest. If you are interested in contributing a case study, please contact:

### Catherine Smith

Creative Interventions Project Manager  
University of the Arts London  
[c.h.smith@lcc.arts.ac.uk](mailto:c.h.smith@lcc.arts.ac.uk)

## Relicensing the Sector Skills Councils

// The Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) are currently undergoing a relicensing process which will result in a re-focusing of their

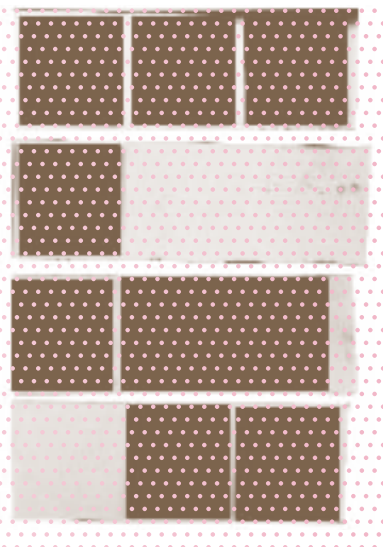
- taking the lead role in developing occupational standards, approving vocational qualifications; collating and communicating sectoral labour market data;
- raising employer engagement, demand and investment;
- considering collective employer action to address specific sector skills needs.

The Leitch Review published in 2006 recommended that only those vocational qualifications approved by SSCs would receive funding, which caused a considerable stir across the ADM sector where most practice-based courses deliver considerable amounts of vocational and work-based learning. However, it is likely that this recommendation was directed at industry training rather than undergraduate provision. Despite the interest in reducing the number of vocational qualifications, recruitment to ADM courses remains high. The SSC's own research shows that ADM production are some of the most graduate-rich activities in the economy.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has made it clear that it expects to see the Councils driving up demand from employers to use HE as a provider of education for the work force and this aspect will form a key part of the relicensing.

ADM-HEA has worked with Skillset and Skillfast-UK on a range of projects and initiatives. Skillset, with Bournemouth Media School and other Media Academies has recently been awarded a HEFCE Employer Engagement Project. In *Networks 05* we reported on two projects jointly funded by ADM-HEA and Skillfast-UK and discussions are underway to build on programmes in placement learning for fashion and textiles students.

Skillfast-UK: <http://www.skillfast-uk.org>  
Skillset: <http://www.skillset.org>



# The Research Assessment Exercise 2008

// **There were 243 submissions consisting of almost 16,000 research outputs to 'Panel O' (which covers most ADM subjects) of RAE 2008. 50% were Art and Design submissions, 9%, History of Art, Architecture and Design and 14% Cultural Communication and Media Studies submissions. The remainder were submissions to sub-panels for Dance, Drama and Performing Arts and Music.**

The three-stage assessment process delivered a 'Profile' for each submission describing the number and range of research outputs from nationally recognised (1★) to world leading (4★), and the number of staff submitting. The assessment process and the results were designed to reflect the diversity, range and quality of research activity and their contexts.

The panels commented on the diversity of submissions, and substantial levels of non-traditional research including practice-based research. Since 2001, there has been greater engagement with the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), research income for the past seven years was £186m and European funding has played an increasing part in sustaining research. Outputs in design research are higher compared to 2001 but pedagogic research remained a minor feature of submissions. Around 25% of History of Art, Architecture and Design research outputs were 'world leading', an increase compared with 2001. Cultural Communication and Media Studies welcomed 'practice-as-research' outputs referring to these as 'frequently very

well received'. In an interesting online discussion on *Exquisite Life*, a blogging network hosted by *Research Research* views on the RAE are mixed.

For many RAE 2008 has been a long, demanding process, requiring huge effort and incurring considerable costs. According to contributor Laura Hood, it cost HEFCE £12m. However, some claim that the RAE is robust and provides confidence in the quality of research in UK HEIs. For example, John Rogers, Director of Research and Knowledge Transfer at the University of Stirling, states that RAE 2008 'is a subtle and mature assessment tool' and 'is recognised internationally as a model of good practice'. There are warnings against abandoning RAE processes in favour of 'light touch expert review' and quantitative metrics proposed for the Research Excellence Framework. However others, including Donald Gillies, Professor of Philosophy and Science at University College London warns: 'the massive peer review exercise encourages conservative research and stifles developments leading to major advances and paradigm shifts'. (THES, 21 January 2009).

The 2008 'Profiles' were designed to thwart attempts to reduce the exercise to league tables. *The Times Higher*, however, did just that on the day the results were published. We still don't know, what the results will mean in terms of funding and it is a high stakes game, particularly in arts and humanities where around 80% of research funding comes from RAE income. In the sciences, RAE funding counts for a far smaller proportion of total funding.

Whatever the funding outcomes announced in March, our group of subjects has emerged as important drivers for change especially for 'new' universities (<http://exquisitelife.researchresearch.com>).

The full results of the RAE 2008 can be found at:

<http://www.rae.ac.uk>,

For an interesting discussion on the RAE outcomes go to: <http://exquisitelife.researchresearch.com>



# 3 Events

## Portfolio Advice Day Supporting Access to A&D

// Each year, over 600 students attend Portfolio Advice Day to get expert help and advice from university admission tutors in art, design and media courses before applying for HE admission. The event, which this year was held at University for the Creative Arts at Epsom on 11 March, is aimed at students from families where neither parent has been to university. It is open to students studying level 3 art and design courses, such as BTEC National Diploma or A-levels. This is the third time I have participated in this event (as admissions tutor) and each time I am convinced of the benefits to both the student receiving the advice and the tutor giving it. The tutor's role at this event is purely advisory and must not in any way cast critical comment on the school or teaching evident in the portfolios presented. In all situations we were supportive of the schools the pupils attended and aware of the pressure teachers are under.

We were not recruiting for our own universities but giving appropriate advice on courses across the board. The event is extremely well organised with timing a crucial element; 600 students with their portfolios all require one-to-one attention without the feeling that they are being rushed. The day is facilitated by a team of young student volunteers to help direct the portfolios and their owners to the right table and to make sure no one student is receiving the monopoly of attention. Most of the students are very keen to talk about their work with the occasional timid student bringing a friend for moral support.

The following scenario I think sums up the spirit of the day:

A student arrived in front of me with a portfolio of work which she was going to present at interview for an Architecture course the following week and wanted some advice. She hadn't shown it to her art teacher because she said her 'teacher wasn't interested' in her and she couldn't talk to her. We of course realized there was probably a chequered history behind that statement! This was a student whose projected A-level grades and subjects were probably not going to gain her access without a very good portfolio but despite this, a university was offering her an interview. The portfolio revealed enthusiasm but a very chaotic unfocused presentation with no evidence of her interest in Architecture. My first piece of advice was that she needed a Foundation course to give her an understanding of the subject she was applying for and an introduction to the design process. Without it, I thought that she wouldn't survive the first term. She thought this was a good idea but having been offered the interview she wanted to give it a go, so with the help of another 3D/ Spatial tutor from another college alongside me, we helped reconstruct the portfolio and sketch books, wrote out detailed instructions on how to mount and label them with the minimal financial outlay. The only additional thing I asked her to do was to go and look at a couple of important contemporary buildings near where she lived, take some photographs and write a few notes on what she honestly thought of them. She knew it was a long shot but she went away knowing that she

would have the experience of an interview and of presenting her work (with a now much improved presentation) and with a back-up plan in case of rejection. Hopefully she also had an increased confidence in her choice of Architecture as a subject.

The students were diverse, entertaining and enthusiastic but occasionally had unrealistic ambitions in terms of the courses they were applying for. Tutors were able to give career advice on the wide variety of courses available at a more appropriate level without dampening that enthusiasm.

Even on the day it was apparent that the students were receiving valuable and practical information that was appreciated and hopefully acted upon.

It is an exhausting day but a very satisfying exhaustion that leaves you with the hope that you may have helped at least one or two students to have confidence and belief in their talents and the courage to make an application to the course of their choice with hope of success.

**Philippa Tunstill**  
Foundation Tutor  
Chelsea College of Art & Design





Photo: Deborah Weinreb

# The Challenge of New Media: Teaching and Learning in the New Media Ecology

// On the 12 December 2008, ADM-HEA, with the University of the West of England and Watershed Media Centre, Bristol, held the forum *The Challenge of New Media: Teaching and Learning in the New Media Ecology*. The forum provided the opportunity for some 70 HE lecturers and media educationalists to explore the premise that a paradigm change is called for in the teaching of Media Studies: for a 'Media Studies 2.0.' The argument for such a change is based upon the view that a new generation of media studies students outstrip their teachers in terms of their use and familiarity with the new world of digital and networked media. Meanwhile, their teachers, themselves largely formed and educated in the era of mass, broadcast media play 'catch-up'. Moreover, the 'old media studies' curriculum with its preoccupation with mass audiences passively consuming centralised media products, with clear distinctions between producers and consumers, between media practices and genres, and a narrow range of key forms - newspapers, cinema, radio and television - are now hopelessly inadequate to address the contemporary world of media and our students' experience of it. This case was put by the media academic and teacher who has probably given this view its fullest expression, Dr William Merrin, of the Media Studies Department at the University of Swansea, in his blog, the 'Media Studies 2.0 Forum' (Merrin, 2007).

However, this is much more than a problem of teaching staff being unable to keep pace with the latest gizmo available in the permanent upgrade culture of new media. A key aspect of Merrin's argument calls us to recognise that as our students use and navigate digital, networked media in their everyday lives, they actually reconfigure, 'their own social relations and expectations', and produce, 'entirely new modes

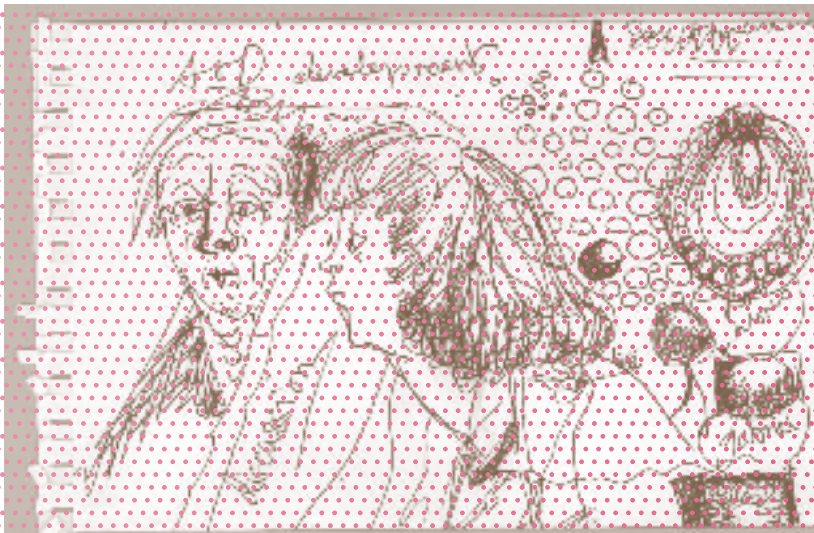
of experience and knowledge'. This is the world of 'user-generated content', of 'me-casting' and 'peer casting'; practices that operate within myriads of networked communities and groups. These new peer-to-peer, personal, pervasive, and mobile uses of media are coming to supplant older broadcast models as digital technologies have led 'to a wide-ranging transformation of all existing technology, in institutional, political and economic media structures'. This is a situation that now calls for new conceptual frameworks and the recovery of previously overlooked media histories.

In responding to Merrin's argument, Jon Dovey (Professor of Screen Media at UWE, Bristol) readily assented to the pace of media and technological change, and to many of the ways in which Merrin characterised it, but he questioned the need for an entirely new media studies. Media Studies is a broad interdisciplinary area fed by several traditions and, in his view, it is not all as hopelessly out of kilter with new developments as the case for a Media Studies 2.0 would have it. Suggesting that there is danger of setting up an 'old' media studies as a 'straw man', Jon Dovey outlined a more fluid and responsive history of media studies and pointed to other trajectories that the discipline had followed. Merrin's 'straw man' was not the Media Studies, which he identified as located primarily in the post '92 sector. There was, he argued, a kind of 'media studies' that had engaged with continuous change in media practices, which worked with concepts such as the 'active audience', which had long been wary of imposing 'expert readings' on rigid media 'texts', and which was alive to the permeability of production and consumption practices, especially in popular culture, and had been so at least since the advent of video technology in the 1970s. In short, while both keynote speakers agreed on the real challenge that new media presented us with as teachers, they differed in their assessment of

the state of media studies as a 'discipline' and a resource.

The challenges and questions raised in the keynote presentations were further explored through a series of case studies presented by participants who had explicitly engaged with them in various ways and contexts: in the teaching of undergraduate courses in media studies, in teaching media production, within journalism studies, and in programme design and curriculum development. A further perspective was offered by recent research undertaken, as part of the Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC) 'Identities and Social Action Programme', into the very active presence and high levels of new media use in the school classroom, that is amongst our future students. In conclusion, current PhD students reflected (as members of the 'new media' generation) upon their own experience of their relatively recent undergraduate education in media studies and media production.

A number of points and observations can be drawn from the plenary session and the discussions following the presentations. There were reports that Media Studies courses exist which do display some of the features on which the call for a Media Studies 2.0 is based. Here, the pedagogic challenge of new media and an engagement with student experience cannot (surely?) be left to the marginal interventions of younger and innovative teachers. However, rather than being understood as a widespread and profound change, there is a tendency for the new media ecology in which we now work and live to be confined and ghettoised in special 'new media' modules or units. On the other hand, other institutions have re-thought their media courses from the bottom up and are acutely aware of both the widespread transformations brought about by digital and networked media, and the new educational possibilities they both demand and facilitate. Indeed, at one end of the spectrum, it was argued that it was not only the transition between the mass media of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the networked forms of the 21<sup>st</sup> that we have to negotiate. Such changes were part of larger social and economic ones reaching into the very nature of the university as a 19<sup>th</sup> century institution trying to function in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is this that we have to understand and reform. A number of participants raised questions about the continuing viability of the settled 'bricks and



Drawing: Carolyn Bew

mortar' institution with its inherited teaching, learning and assessment practices, its centralising tendencies, its timetables and expectations of physical attendance, in the new media and communications economy. Of particular note here, was the manner in which journalism education now mirrored the turmoil and radical change taking place within the industry itself as forms of online journalism clash with the older practices and institutional frameworks of (precisely) the 'broadcast' model of print and television. Lastly, there was a degree of dissent, emerging from several of the participants' accounts, with the 'Media Studies 2.0' view that an entire generation of students was, in fact, 'new media' savvy and thoroughly immersed in 'their' user-generated content. There may be a kind of the 'digital divide' to note here, in that not all students, of all genders, social classes, ethnicities, and dispositions, had the same relationship or affinity with new technologies, indeed with technology per se, and the practices they afford.

The day produced a dynamic map of a very uneven field in which institutional and disciplinary histories appear to be determining the way we are able to respond to the 'Challenge of New Media.' Within this mutating landscape however the day offered a powerful sense of a new generation of teachers and researchers able to redraw the borders of our discipline.

**Martin Lister and Jon Dovey**  
University of the West of England

Jon Dovey and Martin Lister's article, 'Straw Men and Cyborgs?' will be published in a forthcoming special edition on 'Media Studies 2.0' of *Interactions: Studies in Communication and Culture, Intellect*.

William Merrin's 'Media Studies 2.0' paper can be found at:

<http://twopointzeroforum.blogspot.com/2007/03/22-november-2006-media-studies-2.html>

## Learning & Teaching Creative Practice

**Southampton Solent University**  
**9 July 2009**

// **We are delighted to announce that the keynote presentation for ADM-HEA's third learning and teaching day this summer will feature noted film director Ken Russell in conversation with film critic, Mark Kermode. Russell's long career in TV and film has involved both acclaim and controversy and is probably best known for directing the classics *Women in Love* and *The Devils*. His groundbreaking work in TV, particularly his impressionistic studies of composers Delius, Elgar and Debussy, influenced many other directors including Stanley Kubrick. His discussion with Kermode, who co-presents BBC 2's *Culture Show* and writes and comments regularly on film in print and broadcast media, will cover various aspects of his work and film in general.**

The keynote forms part of the Creative Practice Learning and Teaching day to be held at Southampton Solent University on 9 July. The formal framework of the event will include presentations, workshops and networking opportunities, covering a broad spectrum of issues and concerns across the art, design and media sector with innovation and creativity as the overarching theme.

In addition, we will cover issues such as the Art Design Media Teaching Fellowships and the relationship these may have with emerging future patterns for continuing professional development - as well as the changing landscape of the art, design and media curricula with presentations from current ADM teaching fellowship project holders.

Above all, the day is a chance for colleagues to get together informally, to share views and to discuss opportunities more generally. To this end, participants will form discussion groups with the aim of deciding topics for future learning and teaching events.

The two previous learning and teaching days at Goodenough College and Liverpool Hope University were both oversubscribed and widely praised by participants from across the sector. Following the success of the Art Design Media Teaching Fellowship Scheme and the first awards earlier this year, this year's event will maintain and reinforce the progress recently made in the field.

Demand for places is likely to be high, so if you wish to register interest in the event please do so through the website. Your place will not be confirmed until you have completed a booking form and received confirmation from us.

The event is free of charge for staff working within HE in the UK. However, in cases of non-attendance without adequate notice, institutions will be invoiced £50 to cover the costs incurred.

For more information and registration:

<http://www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk/events/teaching-and-learning-creative-practice>

# 4 Features

## Don't mention the 'c word': the rhetorics of creativity in the Roberts Report

**Author's name:** Mark Readman

**Institution:** CEMP, University of Bournemouth

**Keywords:** creativity, rhetoric, discourse, education, policy

Creativity in education is almost universally acknowledged to be a positive, desirable thing. But even in the field of art, design and media there is considerable disagreement about what this 'thing' might be. Outside this field it becomes even more complicated; David Gauntlett, for example, acknowledges that the term 'gets...fuzzy, and can start to seem meaningless' before resigning himself to a 'common sense' definition (Gauntlett, 2007, p.25).

Despite this lack of coherence, we find ourselves using the term in accountable contexts - in programme and unit titles, learning outcomes and even assessment criteria. Consequently it is necessary to examine our usage and application of this slippery signifier. This does not mean attempting to come up with a watertight definition (which I'd argue is impossible anyway), but developing a sensitivity to the assumptions which underpin different deployments of it and, perhaps, accepting sometimes that it may not be a useful term with which to operate.

The report for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, *Nurturing Creativity in Young People* (2006) provides useful examples of how some of the tensions and contradictions around creativity are manifested. Although not specifically aimed at Higher Education, it encompasses post-compulsory education and vocational pathways and, arguably, constitutes an 'authorised version' of what creativity in education might be. And although quantitative measures are crude and limited indicators, the fact that the document features the word 'creativity' 356 times and the adjective 'creative' 426 times suggests a degree of confidence in its application.

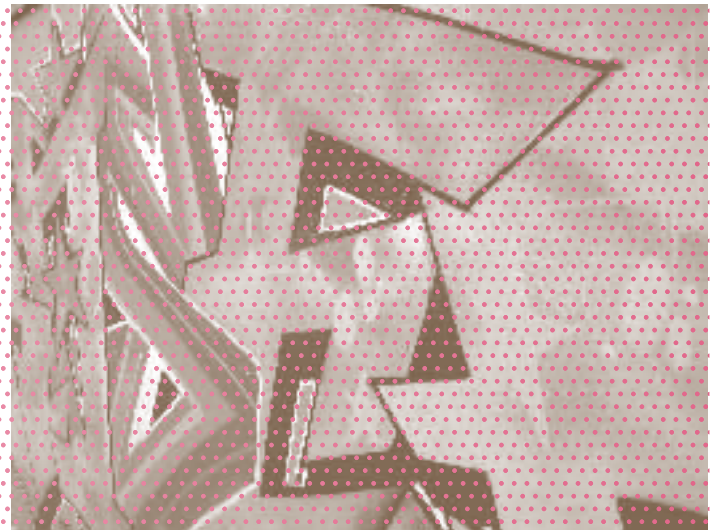
The report, written in response to James Purnell's (then minister for Creative Industries & Tourism) request to identify strategies for nurturing creative

talent, actually incorporates a number of different versions of creativity, or, to draw on Banaji, Burn and Buckingham's excellent literature review, different 'rhetorics of creativity' (2006). The rhetorics they identify in this review are 'creative genius'; 'democratic and political creativity'; 'ubiquitous creativity'; 'creativity for social good'; 'creativity as economic imperative'; 'play and creativity'; 'creativity and cognition'; 'the creative affordances of technology' and 'the creative classroom'. Despite the fact that some of these rhetorics are not merely different, but contradictory, we can identify many of them in *Nurturing Creativity in Young People* and, in the process, may be able to contextualise and rationalise our own use of the term.

One of the key rhetorics in the report falls into the 'creativity as economic imperative' category - the argument that the 'creative industries' (a term which some would argue already represents a triumphant rhetorical marriage of two incompatibles) constitute an area on which the future of the economy will depend to an increasing degree. Consequently a creatively-skilled workforce is required in order to facilitate its continuing growth and profit, so we find that TV programmes such as *Dragons' Den* and *The X Factor* are valuable reference points for students because 'successful participants go through a process of auditioning, presenting and pitching, honing their skills through criticism and turning themselves into a brand...These programmes are all about self-improvement and risk-taking in a creative and entrepreneurial economy' (DCMS, p.23). But also we find that creativity is equally valuable in a generic employment context: 'The capacity for creativity - to work in teams, to share ideas, to identify problems and critically analyse solutions - is increasingly important in all walks of life. Indeed these are the attributes most often valued by employers in particular when making recruitment decisions. Creativity is not just about self-expression. It requires teamwork and discipline' (DCMS, p.57).

We might wonder how such disparate activities as 'self-branding', collaboration and problem identification can possibly be logically connected or grouped together as a homogeneous 'creative skill set' until we realise that the connection is purely a rhetorical one; as Banaji, Burn and Buckingham





argue 'this rhetoric annexes the concept of creativity in the service of a neo-liberal economic programme and discourse' (2006, p56).

Interestingly the report juxtaposes this rhetoric with one which is virtually its antithesis: 'While this economic and regeneration driver is compelling it is matched by an equal and moral imperative - the intrinsic importance of giving children and young people creative experience - both to develop personal identity and confidence and to understand and prepare for a 21<sup>st</sup> century society' (DCMS, p.12). This is a very different conception of creativity; not a set of transferable skills, but a range of enriching experiences which are, in themselves, worthwhile and important to the individual. But the equation of the importance of each - one is 'matched' by the other - and the suggestion that 'creative experience' leads to personal growth (and, implicitly, employability) blurs the distinction between them.

Generally the 'pro social' rhetoric serves to provide bridges between more contradictory areas or to create the illusion of homogeneity. Banaji, Burn and Buckingham argue that 'this rhetoric emerges largely from contemporary social democratic discourses of inclusion and multiculturalism' (2006, p.56) and this is apparent in the Early Years section of the report; '...it is crucial that we see our youngest children's creativity at the heart of these new formations. Creativity here is a necessity not a luxury. Evidence from early years practice suggests that creativity is essential to all five of the ECM (Every Child Matters) outcomes' (DCMS, 2006, p.27). The key example in this section describes a nursery school in which a pedagogical strategy involving the use of play, outdoor space and exercise has been implemented and had a range of benefits, including increased parental engagement. The point here is not to question whether or not this is good, innovative work (as indeed it seems to be), but to query the co-opting of the term creativity and highlight the way in which it is validated through the 'play' rhetoric as well as the 'pro social' rhetoric. Despite the involvement of 'arts and artists' there is no suggestion that the children's creativity is defined through what they produce, but rather through the exploratory process. And the emphasis on health, happiness and engagement effects a connection between 'community project' and 'creative work' which can be seen in other contexts.

In art, design and media we have a tendency to construct creativity around 'great works' and 'great practitioners' - what Banaji, Burn and Buckingham call the 'creative genius' rhetoric - the idea that creativity is a special quality possessed by elite individuals. And another tension in *Nurturing Creativity in Young People* is between this elite conception and a more inclusive, democratic notion of creativity. The democratising impulse is clearly demonstrated in the reference to 'children who are highly creative but not academic and do not like school. The generation brought up with 'rip-mix-burn' as their motto will feed Britain's creative and cultural industries' (DCMS, p.21). Here then it is vital to recognise and celebrate diverse manifestations of creativity in order to provide encouragement to the disenfranchised. There is no qualitative distinction being made here between different products or processes (which, incidentally, is another unresolved tension) and there is even the suggestion that, through blogging, MySpace and Garage Band, all young people are equally creative. However, in relation to Creative Portfolios, the notion of creative excellence emerges: 'EMI should host a site for children with highly musical Creative Portfolios' and 'At a higher level one could imagine an award scheme, for people who have gone through a number of

creative projects...perhaps this could be called the *Dizzee Rascal Award* or the *Simon Cowell Award* or the *Damien Hirst Award*' (p.24). The nomination of a figurehead for each award here is an indication of an investment in an elitist conception of creativity, regardless of whether or not one considers that Simon Cowell is a 'creative genius'.

Despite the confident assertions in the Government Response to *Nurturing Creativity in Young People* that 'creativity involves thinking or behaving imaginatively; this imaginative activity is purposeful...these processes must generate something original; the outcome must be of value in relation to the objective' (DCMS, p.4) there are many tensions and contradictions around the term, even in the report to which this responds. In the appendices, for example, there is a range of replies to five key questions posed by Paul Roberts, the report's author. In response to the question 'what generates creativity?' one contribution states 'Creativity can be taught in a structured and disciplined fashion' and is followed by one stating 'Creativity is generated by children's own natural curiosity and imagination and cannot be 'taught' in a traditional way' (DCMS, p.68).

We might recognise in this, admittedly selective and partial, analysis some of our own assumptions and prejudices about creativity and acknowledge that we have our own intellectual and emotional stake in it. At the very least there seems to be a case for adopting a more sceptical position in relation to it, which is not to deny the value of exciting work and good teaching, but to be more explicit about our agenda and aware of the rhetoric when we invoke 'the c word': •

#### Contact Info

Mark Readman  
Centre for Excellence in Media Practice (CEMP)  
The Media School  
Bournemouth University  
Talbot Campus  
Poole BH12 5BB  
Email: mark@cemp.ac.uk

#### Biography

After many years encouraging FE students to be creative, Mark Readman now teaches on the MA in Creative and Media Education at Bournemouth University. His PhD research attempts to make sense of creativity by engaging with how it functions as a cultural construct.

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# The value of ambiguity as a tool for stimulating creativity

**Author's name:** Nik Mahon

**Institution:** Southampton Solent University

**Keywords:** advertising, creativity, ambiguity, communication, branding, ideation

## Abstract

Clarity has always remained one of the key tenets of communication. However, a combination of new technology, new media and new audiences with enhanced levels of media literacy, has given rise to occasions where ambiguity can have intrinsic value as a tool for engaging advertising audiences in discourse with the brand, and allowing them broader scope for personal interpretation of the brand message. Beyond this, the same principles that apply to ambiguous advertising images can be employed in other aspects of communication, and in particular, to the manner in which individuals or teams are briefed on creative problems. This article, derived from research conducted as part of the author's Doctoral thesis, examines the value of ambiguity as a trigger for the imagination and ideation.

## How ambiguity engages the imagination

In recent decades we have witnessed the rising predominance of visual over textual or verbal matter in many different fields of media communication. This is particularly the case when examining advertising and the manner in which it communicates. The 'long copy' magazine advertisements of the sixties, seventies and eighties have largely been replaced with punchy images and visual layouts, art directed in a manner that is designed to relay the advertising message to a new, media literate audience who are more than capable of decoding even the most obscure advertising image, which when accompanied with the brand logo or pack shot, can be reframed to take on a new significance and meaning.

There can be little doubt that much of this has been driven by advances in technology, and the access that we all now have to tools and resources that were once the domain of a few specialist media experts. One impact of the

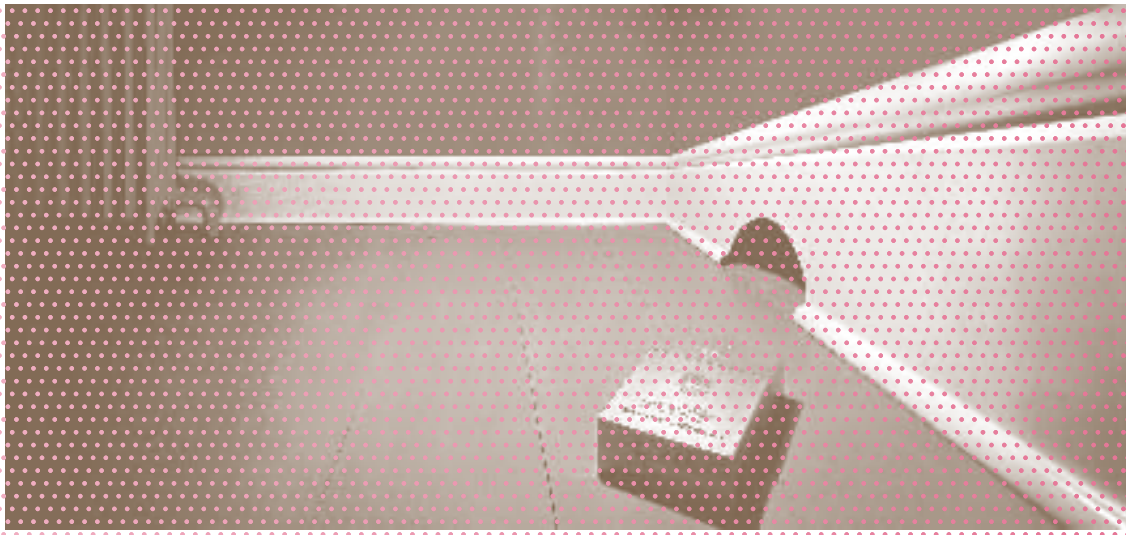
changes new technology has brought about is the evolution of audiences who are no longer passive receptors of the advertising message, but instead prefer to engage in dialogue with the brand.

Whilst a picture can undoubtedly say a thousand words, there is of course no guarantee that the interpretation of that image will be the same for everyone. At the same time, advertising images are often intentionally designed to offer multiple meanings and sometimes contain subtexts that can prompt lively academic debate on semiotic content and hidden narratives. Ambiguity finds its role in modern advertising communication as a tool for engaging today's media savvy audience, and involving them at a higher level.

The inherent ambiguity of visual matter should be viewed as an opportunity for media communicators to achieve this higher level of engagement with their audiences. Ambiguous information establishes a series of questions in the mind of the receiver, who then sets about the task of resolving those questions (as is the nature of the human mind to leave nothing unresolved). Where any effort is required in assigning meaning to ambiguous information, the imagination begins to take over. A good example of this is the above image. This image (originally used by Dr Rupert Sheldrake as part of an experiment to test his hypothesis of Morphic Resonance) was used by Mahon (2008) to evaluate the capacity of ambiguous information to stimulate the imagination of test subjects sampled from a cohort of undergraduate advertising students.

The image has been abstracted to a series of irregular black shapes on a white ground. When asked to find the hidden image (or images) depicted by these shapes, subjects reported seeing a variety of different images. Different subjects saw different images. These included images of witches, lions and monkeys, bats, rats, panda bears, dinosaurs and a map of the world. One subject even claimed he could identify the face of Bob Marley within the shapes. When told that the image was in fact a cowboy on a horse, many of the subjects saw this image directly, others took a while longer and a few had to have the image outlined for them. Once the image of the cowboy on the horse was seen, it became difficult for most of the subjects to see anything else.





Whilst the image remains ambiguous, the mind is impelled to resolve the visual puzzle and make sense of the information it is presented with. There is an overwhelming compulsion to find congruity and gestalt within the image and in the absence of clearer visual clues the imagination takes over, searching for shapes and silhouettes it can recognise as a point of reference. As soon as the true image is revealed, and ultimately seen by the individual subject, the imagination (and divergent thinking) 'closes down'. The compulsion to find alternative solutions no longer exists and further images are not perceived.

This demonstration provides a useful model of how ambiguity stimulates the imagination and liberates divergent thinking. It also demonstrates how ideas can be blocked by either too much information, or other ideas. Anyone working in a creative discipline has, at some time, experienced the excitement of having a seemingly creative or innovative idea, only to realise (or more embarrassingly have it pointed out) that the idea already exists in an identical or similar form. The extent to which an individual can be unwittingly influenced by an existing solution when they are searching for their own original idea is difficult to gauge, and it could also be argued that many original solutions and ideas result from the re-combination or re-interpretation of old ideas.

#### **Ambiguous visual communication in advertising**

The manner in which ambiguous visual communication can be used by advertisers to engage audiences with their brand can be demonstrated by some of the tobacco print advertisements produced during the seventies, by the advertising agency; Collett Dickenson Pearce (CDP) who created the first of many surreal print-based adverts for Benson & Hedges cigarettes. The advert featured the gold cigarette pack poised outside a mousehole. The rather obscure nature of this advert, was CDP's response to new government legislation in the UK at that time, restricting the use of any references to high status, sexual attractiveness, celebrities, young people, power, authority or any other areas that were traditionally used by brands to create positive associations, in cigarette advertising. The image itself was reported to have been inspired by a book on French surreal photography and spawned a succession of similarly styled adverts for the brand over the years that followed. The use of this ambiguous image raises several questions: Why the mousehole? What does the pack symbolise? What is the relevance? What are Benson & Hedges trying to say?

The ambiguity of the image will prompt a range of different interpretations. To some the pack will represent cheese, to others a mousetrap, whilst another person may see the pack as representing a waiting cat or predator. Twenty different people may have twenty different interpretations from the image, which is obviously symbolising something – but what? The compulsion to resolve this visual conundrum engages the target audience with the advertising communication, during which time the brand image is constantly being embedded in their consciousness: Branding by stealth!

Following this CDP produced another Benson & Hedges print advert, featuring several ancient Egyptian pyramids. The warm golden orange colour cast in which the photograph was printed helped conceal the fact that one of the pyramids was not a pyramid at all, but a large scale composite photo of a Benson & Hedges cigarette pack. At first glance four pyramids are seen.

On closer inspection, it can be seen that the pyramid in the background is actually a Benson & Hedges cigarette pack. Once again however, there is no particular advertising proposition that surfaces or becomes clear on the discovery of the hidden cigarette packet. The image remains as ambiguous as ever and once again the audience is left with a puzzle to solve, during which time the image of the gold Benson & Hedges pack is being branded in their thoughts.

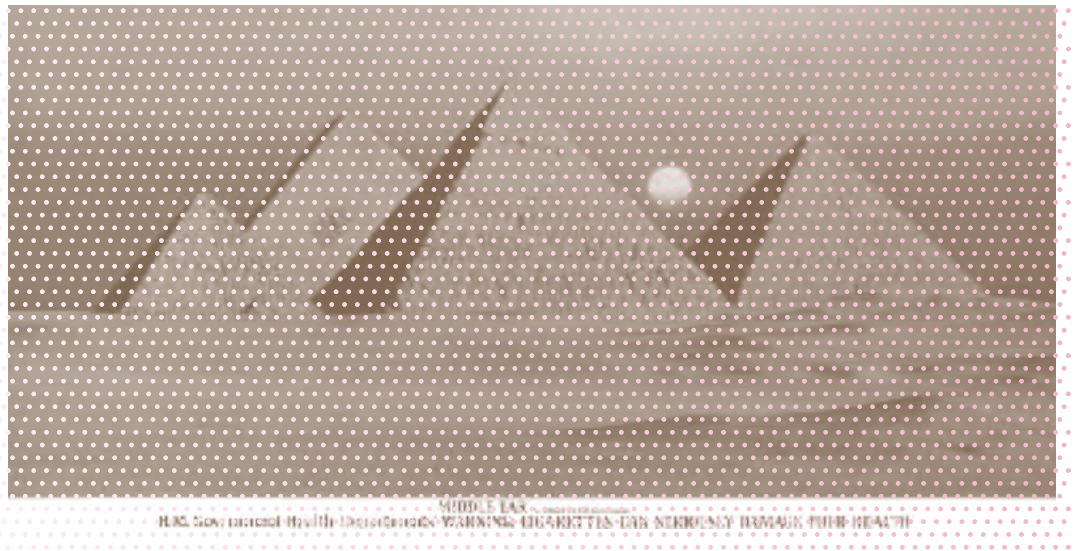
This strategy was emulated by other cigarette brands such as Silk Cut, and although driven by the constrictive legislation imposed on tobacco advertising, became a template for brand advertising that other product categories were to adopt over the course of time, as it became more important for brands to interact on a higher level with their audiences.

#### **A new concept for creative briefings**

The early phase of any creative problem solving process invariably involves a degree of information gathering, research and analysis of the problem. This is defined by many traditional models (such as Wallas, 1926), as the preparation phase of the process and is viewed by most as a necessary foundation for ideas. Design and media students are taught early-on in their respective courses to find out as much as they can about the creative problem before they start to search for solutions. In the case of advertising students, the creative brief is only a starting point and the students are encouraged to dig deeper to discover more about the brand or service in order to develop a better understanding of it, and the advertising problem. It is a general assumption that the more information acquired, the greater the resulting creative output. The emphasis with this traditional model is upon clarity of understanding, familiarity with the problem and completeness of information. However therein lies the paradox. During 'classroom' observations and research conducted by the author, it became clear that there were occasions where too much information at the outset of the creative process and during briefing sessions, actually constrained creativity by channelling students in too narrow a direction.

Previous studies by researchers and writers such as Maier (1931), Wertheimer (1958), Ericsson and Smith (1991), De Bono (1993), and Root Bernstein, (Bernstein and Garnier, 1993), suggest that individuals who are unfamiliar with the problem area are more likely to discover a fresh way of tackling the problem. When presented with any problem (creative or otherwise), it is the nature of the human mind to search for past references to similar problems that it has encountered before. Having located those references, the mind will often default to past methods or approaches for tackling those problems. This in turn can lead to similar solutions as those previously found, resulting in the absence of new or fresh original ideas. One way to counter this effect is to limit the amount of information the problem solver (or in the case of advertising; the creative team) is provided with at the briefing stage.

During seminars and workshops being delivered on the BA (Hons) Advertising course at Southampton Solent University, second year students were often given briefs which contained very little detailed information about the brand or product in question. In some cases the briefs were deliberately ambiguous in order to encourage a wider range of interpretations and subsequent ideas. Students generally appeared more creatively liberated and had more ideas when key information was omitted or left unclear. >>



This obviously has possible implications for the creative departments of advertising agencies and suggests an alternative model for briefing creative teams in order to promote original ideas.

Imagine for a moment that the creative team are briefed on the requirements for an advertising campaign promoting their client's latest brand of mobile phone. As soon as the team are told that the product is a mobile phone, their thoughts would turn to previous mobile phone advertisements, and there is a good chance that their final solutions will look like previous advertisements for mobile phones or borrow heavily from past commercials. It is less likely that their ideas would involve fresh, innovative solutions or break any new ground in terms of redefining the way in which mobile phones are advertised, either in terms of visual style, conceptual theme or creative message. It is as though creativity, or in this case the capacity to find fresh ideas, is blocked by the knowledge of past solutions.

Now imagine an alternative scenario. Instead of a full briefing, the creative team are asked for ideas to promote a device that enables people to make more friends. They are not told the device in question is a mobile phone. As you would expect, the ideas and solutions generated from this kind of briefing would be, on the whole, very different from those generated in the earlier case. It is also likely that a majority of these ideas may be totally inappropriate or unworkable as an advertising solution for a mobile phone. Nevertheless, it is highly probable that there will be a few ideas that do offer a new way forward and an alternative creative solution to the problem. At this stage the full details of the product could be revealed to the creative team who could then examine which of their ideas offered the best solution.

Withholding the name of the product from the initial briefing session may seem to be a somewhat radical strategy, and it does of course require the author or presenter of the brief to reinterpret the function of the product in a manner that does not reveal what the product is. However, it is this initial reinterpretation of information that allows the problem solver (or in the above case the creative team), to move beyond the more conventional way of perceiving the product and adopt a more lateral approach to the problem. At the same time an element of ambiguity is introduced, which in turn triggers the imagination.

### Conclusion

Ambiguity, often associated with visual communication, should be considered in terms of its positive value and potential for stimulating creative thought. In advertising communication it is clear how this can sometimes operate as a tool for engaging media audiences and reinforcing branding. However, there is also great potential for using ambiguous information in creative briefing sessions to stimulate fresh ideas and to promote idea fluency. Ambiguous communication raises questions that need to be answered. Those answers will be dependant on each person's individual frame of reference and interpretation of the information. Furthermore, each of those interpretations will differ from one person to the next, amplifying the effect and potentially generating a wider variety of original ideas and solutions. In this context, ambiguity can be harnessed as a tool, enabling creative problem solvers to view the problem with fresh eyes, and providing fertile ground for creativity to flourish. •

### Contact info

Nik Mahon  
Faculty of Media, Arts & Society  
Southampton Solent University  
East Park Terrace  
Southampton  
Hampshire  
SO52 9HP

E-mail: [nik.mahon@solent.ac.uk](mailto:nik.mahon@solent.ac.uk)

### Biography

Nik Mahon is a Senior Lecturer at Southampton Solent University where he teaches on the BA (Hons) Advertising course. A former Creative Director, he has been involved in the design and delivery of a variety of advertising, media and communication courses for universities here in the UK, and overseas since 1993. He has also been actively engaged in the development of creative thinking programmes and short courses at the University and externally for several major blue chip organisations. In 2008 Nik was awarded his doctorate for research into techniques and approaches for fostering creativity on undergraduate courses and programmes of study. As a writer and commentator on creative advertising he co-authored *The Fundamentals of Creative Advertising* (published in 2006 by AVA) and has contributed to several other key advertising and marketing texts.

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# Sound, music and radio in the creative curriculum: perspectives on undergraduate study

**Author's name:** Tim McClellan

**Institution:** Southampton Solent University

**Keywords:** Curriculum design, innovation, learning styles , radio, media, podcasting

## Abstract

The appreciation of the impact of sound in our lives and our learning is ignored in many undergraduate programmes. Whether focussing on sound as a different learning style, putting together a podcast as an alternative to written coursework or listening to radio broadcasts with a more critical ear, creative students need to recognize how sound plays a major part in the way we interpret the world and how we present ourselves. Embedding basic radio production skills and an appreciation of sound and music into a creative undergraduate curriculum can help access an individual student's own creativity for exploration and growth academically, personally and professionally.

## The starting point!

Listening to the backgrounds and previous learning experiences of freshers each October, you could be forgiven for thinking that radio does not exist as a medium at all. For students having taken A Level Media Studies, most will not have had the chance to work with sound recording equipment or put together a sound podcast. Whilst most boards allow audio production as a medium for assessment, many Sixth Forms and Colleges do not offer this opportunity, often through limited resources. Video production appears to be the order of the day! To suggest that an appreciation of the nature of sound is covered by incorporating sound into a video piece does tend to sideline the power and

special impact of radio and using the sense of hearing and listening. Students taking performance, art and design courses as post-16 qualifications generally fare better in understanding how they can use music, in particular, to help them forge their own creative direction. They are usually introduced to music as a stimulus for creativity, which is then portrayed in a different medium through dance, drama or design-based artefact.

But it is a letter from a schoolgirl in Huddersfield written to a 'Children's Hour' radio producer nearly sixty years ago which pinpoints the real creative possibilities of sound. The girl wrote to the producer, Trevor Hill, after watching a television adaptation of Frances Hodgson Burnett's childrens' classic 'The Secret Garden'. Hill had produced the work for radio a year earlier. In his book 'Over the Airwaves' (2005) he recounts that the girl had written 'whilst I am enjoying 'The Secret Garden' on television, I enjoyed it even more on radio because the scenery was better'.

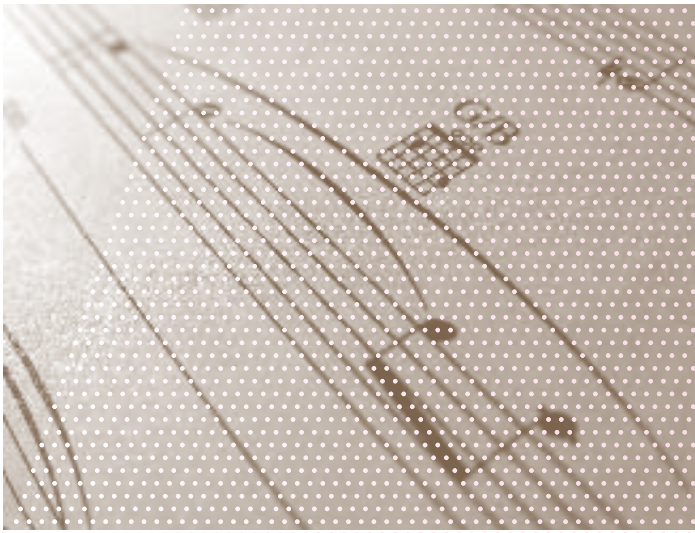
It is the power of the sound medium which allows the stimulation and creation of individual mental images and the associated emotions which allows students to tap into and harness this capability and to assist in the development of their own creative faculties.

## Getting students involved

The need for greater creativity in schools was highlighted in a report in 2007 from the Commons Education Committee. It stressed that creativity needed to be extended across, and embedded within, the whole curriculum. It also clearly stated that appropriate resource in all its forms had to be committed to this end.

Getting first year students in HE to tap into the wider range of their own creative faculties can often need a kick start. A reluctance for them to move>>





Students at the radio desk

Photo: Southampton Solent University

away from their tried and tested methods of idea generation and output towards a more structured approach like those suggested by de Bono (1990), van Gundy (1988) and others can mean a shift outside their comfort zone. But study and thinking at University is designed to push students' boundaries to try new approaches in a supportive environment and to become confident in tackling structured and unstructured problems and creative tasks in new and challenging ways.

Getting first year undergraduates to examine their world of sound by actually listening to what is going on around them (often for the first time) in the classroom, outside the building, in their own homes and even in a quiet room is an interesting learning experience for both tutor and student. Identifying and cutting through different layers, intensity, levels and positions of sound (or silence) and its movement is one thing. Thinking about how these sounds can change and transform our emotions is another. Hearing words being spoken professionally in a radio play or through poetry usually evokes a completely different response to the student simply reading them silently off the page. Asking students to identify and read a poem which has moved them can be problematic. Many will not identify a poem at all. But ask them to find lyrics from a song which has moved them and that is a totally different proposition. The words are readily found, eagerly dissected and the link with emotions easily voiced. It is the sound of the words, the aural context of the song and an identifiable, personal link which are important in accessing the students' analytical abilities.

#### Music in the non-musical curriculum

Music is a powerful tool. What types of music do students like? What does music do for them at a club or in their room? If music can change their emotions, maybe they can use music to change other people's emotions too. The usefulness in performance, art and design courses is clear but the relevance for taught courses to do with advertising, retailing, public relations and communication, for example, is also evident as these involve persuasion using a variety of senses. Students in this latter set of courses will typically produce considerable written and visual output but nothing or very little in sound. Students who are musicians at any level will readily testify to the effect of their musical creative outputs on themselves as individuals and how this impacts on their mood and other work.

Working with classical and contemporary music can help access students' creativity. Used either as a specific stimulus or background music to create 'mood' in a creative workshop students report a positive experience. The vast majority will have some sort of music running when they are working at home in a positive study environment. Replicating this in some way in the classroom can help produce a more motivated approach on the part of the student to the in-class group work or individual task.

Nina Jackson (2006) advocates the use of music in the secondary classroom for three main reasons. 'Listening to music in lessons helps pupils concentration and study skills ...[it] makes pupils feel happy, relaxed and ready for work....[and it] helps pupils achieve more'. My own experience in the undergraduate classroom, in a variety of settings, echoes these points. Students also report that there is a 'different' and 'positive' atmosphere in these seminars. Adding to the learning environment with music, they say, treats them as adults and allows them to interact as a group more effectively

in tackling a task as it reproduces an aural environment which they are used to when working at home. Current student favourites are albums by John Meyer (Continuum) and Jack Johnson (In Between Dreams). Naturally, this selection will change over time. Both CDs set a calming, acoustic, reflective background for student working and learning. For their seminar work, students can also bring in the CDs which 'work' for them and it exposes the rest of the group to other musical tastes.

#### Visualization

Another approach using sound, music and words as a focus is visualization. Generally it is students who have taken previous courses in art, design or performance who have come across this approach before. I call this technique 'guided daydreaming'. The approach involves using the imagination to create images, sounds, emotions and other sensations in the mind. By using music or sounds such as waves on the seashore or sounds of the countryside in the background, an atmosphere is created which can allow the student to let his or her mind legitimately wander during a set time during a seminar towards a desired and specified creative end. It could be imagining a picture, a walk across a beach, a meeting with a friend or a chance to ask themselves or someone else a particular question and to listen to the response. It helps reflection and allows the student 'time out' and space to permit and facilitate the creation and flow of creative ideas; to give voice to their imagination. Grace (2001) regards visualization as a potentially positive tool in a creative learning environment. She argues for its inclusion in the curriculum for student self-empowerment.

Closely linked is the concept of self-efficacy or the belief that we are able to bring about and sustain positive change in our lives. Student self efficacy relates to balancing academic work with the other demands, pressures...and temptations...of student life. By using music or natural sounds and a gentle verbal push in a particular direction students can begin to identify and set their own goals in various aspects of their life. They can focus on particular coursework briefs to mentally go through the various possibilities and take a critical position on their work and that of others.

#### Radio

Introducing radio production, recording and thinking in sound into the creative curriculum, even at a basic level, can help students to recognize the auditory learning style and to broaden their awareness of the requirements and capabilities of different media. A sonic narrative, for example, when a story is told as a linked and logical sequence of sounds with few words, is a challenge in which students are forced to think in auditory terms as opposed to the written word. Just as in the earlier example of 'The Secret Garden' students can create pictures in the listener's mind. Topics such as 'a day in the life of...' give scope for a range of sounds that can be integrated. 'A day in the life of a pound coin' demands the personification of the coin through a voice. How would the voice of the pound coin differ from that of a ten pence piece? Thinking creatively can lead to a greater critical awareness of sound in the wider environment and a general enhancement of creative thinking skills in different contexts.

A different form of assessment could be for students to submit work in the form of an audio podcast. In practice this is an audio file placed on a University server and/or submitted by students on CD. Cane and Cashmore

(2008) ran a pilot study in 2007 with a group of students studying genetics. The students were required to submit an assessment in the form of an audio podcast. Feedback on the process was positive. The acquisition of transferable skills in producing the podcasts was highlighted and regarded as motivating by students since they were doing something different.

As a potential marketing tool for courses, students could be paid to put together one or a series of podcasts which could be put on university and course websites or issued to UCAS applicants via CD. Competent students could use their radio production skills to gather material for 'an insider's guide' to their university or course. It makes sense for potential applicants to hear the true voices and experiences of real students in a form and using technology with which they are familiar (i.e. a downloadable audio file) with those students' perspectives. Extracts from seminar group work, interviews with students and staff and examples of extra-curricular activities could all form part of such a podcast, mixed together professionally by the student with guidance from audio-based teaching staff.

### Changing technologies

Students can get their own voices – and those of others – heard both cheaply and simply. In most universities equipment will be available for recording through a media resources service but for some, the bug may bite and the student will want to get his or her own gear.

Basic but adequate software such as the open source sound editor 'Audacity' can be downloaded, both for Mac and PC, free of charge. Other paid-for software is available, offering more effects and easier operation such as Adobe Audition (Versions 1.5 or 3 for PC only), Flash card or hard disk digital recording machines capable of producing good quality sound can be bought new from £150 upwards whilst older technology in the form of minidisc machines can be bought online for around £15. Minidisc machines are perfectly acceptable recorders but transfer of the audio file to the sound editor needs to be done in real time. A 20 minute recording takes 20 minutes to transfer. Hard disk machines transfer files in seconds. Invest in a good quality microphone. This will make all the difference to the sound quality of the recording. You can easily get kitted out with good quality equipment and (free) software for under £100.

### The changing job and media market

Students who are not following radio production or journalism based courses will probably not be looking for jobs working in radio stations as presenters or journalists. A typical local commercial radio station is run with around ten people! But to look at radio stations as the only employment avenue for students with radio skills is also missing the point. Podcasting either for fun or for profit (or both) is an important potential opening for the student to disseminate their work online and a freelance employment source. Skills needed for a good podcast are precisely the same as those needed for a good radio programme or feature. The only difference is that the distribution of the output is by a different means. One is via a transmitter, the broadcast is transient, the other is via the web, it is there as long as you want it to be.

### Conclusion

This article has considered several ways by which generic sound, music and audio production techniques and skills can be incorporated into any

imaginative and creative curriculum. The approaches described are not intended to be a panacea. Indeed, some students may be reluctant to embrace new ways of learning and will wish to stay with what is familiar. What is clear is that a range of approaches in learning and teaching is required to create and support a future curriculum that is both motivating and relevant.

This outline of several auditory-based approaches can provide some food for thought in the design, development and operation of courses and modules to kick-start the creative thinking process. In encouraging first year students, in particular, to try new approaches to learning in a supportive and exploratory environment, the transition between Sixth Form or College and the demands of Higher Education can be made smoother. •

### Contact info

Tim McClellan  
Faculty of Media, Arts and Society  
Southampton Solent University  
East Park Terrace  
Southampton  
SO14 0YN

e-mail: tim.mcclellan@solent.ac.uk

### Biography

Tim McClellan is a Principal Lecturer at Southampton Solent University and teaches on undergraduate programmes in Advertising, Public Relations and Media Communication. He is a broadcaster and a former senior journalist in the commercial radio sector. Tim also organizes and runs bespoke courses in media training and podcasting for a range of professional organizations. He is co-author of 'Schools in the Spotlight', a guide to media relations for headteachers and governors and is currently completing a doctorate in approaches to creative learning for undergraduate self-development. Tim is a Chartered Marketer and a member of the Committee of the Radio Academy South. He was also a judge for the 2008 Nations and Regions awards for The Radio Academy

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# Student-centred student teachers: on maintaining teaching opportunities

## while expanding learning support offerings: lessons from London School of Economics (LSE)

**Author's name:** Niall Brennan, Mehita Iqani and Frédéric Lesage  
**Institution:** London School of Economics  
**Keywords:** Advertising, creativity, ambiguity, communication, branding, ideation

The second ADM-HEA Media, Communications and Cultural Studies Prize was presented at the MeCCSA Annual Conference held in Bradford earlier this year. The Prize, for the best paper analysing key issues impacting on media, communications and cultural studies higher education was awarded to Niall Brennan, Mehita Iqani, and Frédéric Lesage from London School of Economics & Political Science. Their paper explores the creative ways that they have addressed the development of doctoral students' teaching practice alongside experiential learning opportunities for Masters level Media and Communications students.

### Introduction: the landscape of teaching and learning

The Department of Media and Communications has been an independent department at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) since 2003. Currently, the department offers four taught MSc programmes - *Media and Communications*; *Global Media and Communications*; *Media, Communication and Development*; and *Politics and Communication* - as well as a shared MSc programme with LSE's Gender Institute and an MPhil/PhD programme. The diversity of nationalities among the Department's approximate 200 masters and 40 doctoral students is consistent with LSE's

entire cosmopolitan student body: 140 countries are represented across 8500 students in the whole School.

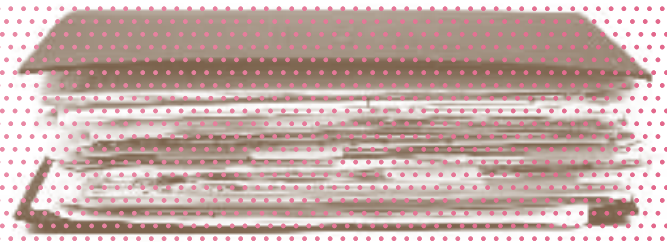
Until the end of the 2007 - 08 academic year, the Department recruited PhD students to work as graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) on some of its compulsory courses. This provided PhD students with much-needed professional development. Complementing this opportunity, recent School examinations of the Department found that:

'[...] the presence of GTAs and Teaching Fellows on these courses had had a positive impact providing coherence and consistency that might otherwise be lacking.' (TLAC, 2006, pp.3-4)

However, more recent external and internal evaluations of the School determined that students' reception of GTA teaching at the master's level were mixed:

'[...] there is a perception that the extensive use of graduate teaching assistants is not providing students with value for money, given the level of fees being paid.' (Hartley, 2007, p.3)

Findings also revealed (see HEA and TLAC reports cited) a need for greater student learning support for master's students (see also Patel, 2008) as well as greater professional development for GTAs. These reports led to a School-wide re-evaluation of GTA programmes for 2008 - 09, which included suspending all GTA teaching at the masters level. This represented



a particular challenge for the Media and Communications department since, without an undergraduate programme, it meant depriving doctoral students of the opportunity to gain teaching experience. Ironically, addressing the learning needs of one group of students meant restricting the learning opportunities of another.

Given this landscape of teaching and learning in the Department at the end of the 2007 – 2008 year, it became clear that a tailored approach to meeting the needs of both doctoral and masters students was required for the 2008 – 2009 year. Doctoral students had an urgent need for continued teaching opportunities that allowed them to *learn how to teach*. Masters students had a need for extra learning support that enabled them to better cope with their course demands and the high expectations of the Department and School. But before introducing the solution designed to meet both of these needs, our Support Seminar Series, it is helpful to briefly address an area of pedagogical theory that frames its primary objective: student-centred learning.

#### **Student-centred student teachers: a pedagogical perspective**

The term 'student-centred' learning is 'used very commonly in the literature and in University policy statements' and is defined in various ways by various authors. Although less commonly put into practice, it implies 'active learning, choice in learning, and the shift of power in the teacher-student relationship' (O'Neill and McMahon, 2005, p.34). Active learning entails a focus on 'experiential learning and opportunities for reflective dialogue' (Duron et al, 2006, p.162), and a de-emphasis on unidirectional or lecturing teaching styles. A core goal of active learning techniques is the development of critical thinking, which can be defined as 'the ability of thinkers to take charge of their own thinking', and which is encouraged by active learning (Duron et al, 2006, p.160). Choice in learning refers mostly to curriculum design, and 'allows students to set some of their own learning objectives/outcomes' (O'Neill and McMahon, 2005, p.30). It can also refer, quite simply, to providing a vast array of core-course components, as well as learning-support components, so that as many aspects of educational experience as possible are available to students.

In terms of power shifts, this represents a 'paradigm shift away from teaching to an emphasis on learning', which in turn has 'encouraged power to be moved from the teacher to the student' (O'Neill and McMahon, 2005, p.27). In other words, student-centred learning prioritises the needs of students and recognises that their learning is most effective when it involves activity and practice. Student-centred learning is rooted in a constructivist perspective, stressing 'the centrality of the learner, and the fostering of independent learning through the use of negotiated learning strategies and of learning contracts' (Carlile and Jordan, 2005, p.19). These constructivist roots in turn allow for teaching approaches that recognise and prioritise the presence of diversity in learning, and the plethora of world-views held by learners (Carlile and Jordan, 2005, p.19), something especially relevant to the international profile of LSE students.

Furthermore, traditional teacher-centred learning tends to emphasize summative assessment. Student-centred learning, however, represents a move towards formative assessment and ongoing feedback throughout the academic year. O'Neill and McMahon (2005, p.31) argue that formative

assessment provides 'a focus for the student by highlighting their learning gaps and areas that they can develop'. This can include providing feedback on informal writing as well as other strategies that do not necessarily culminate in year-end marks, but rather give students critical and constructive commentary on their work throughout the year. According to longitudinal research on how 'real people' learn (Race, 1997), an important obstacle to effective learning is the lack of practical opportunities, as well as the lack of feedback and digestion time. Students need a space to rehearse the theories and concepts they learn in other courses: to put these ideas into their own words; and to work with them in other areas of thinking and practice. Race points out as well that effective learning requires 'digestion time', equalling the opportunity to 'make sense of the learning experience'. This kind of formative attention through teachers' recognition of digestion time has been lacking, based on reports of masters' student learning experiences in the past.

A UK university study assessed how students react and respond to student-centred learning and found that they 'generally held very positive views' of it, even though few had heard of the term before (Lea et al, 2003). In fact, student respondents to this study 'felt there was more respect for the student in this approach, that it was more interesting, exciting and it boosted their confidence' (Lea et al, 2003 quoted in O'Neill and McMahon 2005, p.33).

This brief discussion of student-centred learning has highlighted certain key terms: 'practice', 'active learning' and a 'power shift' from teacher to student. O'Neill and McMahon (2005, p.29) argue that in the practical situation of the classroom, learning is not experienced in a dichotomous form as either student - or teacher-centred, but situated instead along a continuum book-ended by both. In other words, student-centred learning does not remove the teacher from the learning equation, but reorients the teacher as someone who responds to student needs and creates a framework within which active learning and empowerment take place.

The information gathered in Department reviews and wider School assessments imparted the importance of delivering learning support and formative feedback to masters students to help them cope with their workloads. As such, we have created a 'digestion space', focused on transferable skills that include critical reading and writing skills, as well as learning how to operationalize theories and methods through students' own thinking and research practice. Next, we will look at the process involved in designing the Support Seminar Series.

#### **Support Seminar Series design process**

Following a series of meetings with the Head of Department and LSE teaching-support experts from the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC), three doctoral students wrote a proposal for the Support Seminar Series. The objective was to design a learning-support schema as relevant to masters students as to the doctoral students teaching it. In terms of the former, the series' relevance was all the more imperative because it would not be accredited. Arguably, an unaccredited seminar provides little extrinsic motivation (Biggs, 2003, p.61) for masters students to attend, compounded by the facts that this series would not formally reward students, nor would it be taught by any Department faculty. »



Masters students would need to be able to distinguish the series from other School support resources already available, such as those provided by TLC and The Language Centre. This meant designing workshops that not only trained students for academic reading and writing skills but that also grounded those skills within the discipline of media and communications. Additionally, GTAs would need to address theories and concepts in the same way as lecturers do so as to provide GTAs with the relevant and transferable skills for a teaching career. Finally, we would need to avoid reiterating the same theoretical or methodological material presented in credited courses and avoid introducing completely new or contradictory material not explicitly tied into the existing Masters programs.

This team of doctoral students identified *Theories and Concepts in Media and Communications* and *Methods of Research in Media and Communications* as the fundamental courses for the masters programmes in Media and Communications. Most, if not all, students have to take these courses in order to receive their diploma; the courses span both the Michaelmas and Lent Terms; and together, they deal with essential theories, concepts, and methods that a postgraduate student in the discipline should know.

Paralleling these courses, the seminar series was set to 19 one-hour sessions across the first two terms of the academic year including weekly office hours for student consultations. The maximum number of students per seminar was limited to fifteen, well within Brown and Atkins' (1988, p.51) recommendation of no more than 20 students for optimum seminar activities. Objectives and learning outcomes were developed for each seminar, although the overall objective of the series was to develop masters students' general vocational and intellectual competencies (Barnett, 1992, pp. 155-162): skills that would enable the students to pass (or excel in) their accredited courses, but also attain transferable skills for future professional or research practice in media and communications. The seminar series was designed as a narrative arc for the student's academic development throughout the year so as to generate student interest and participation in the seminar itself. This arc would follow the rhythms of the two courses mentioned above by practically tackling the core concepts of those courses. The first core element of the seminar series that we included focussed on the specific academic hurdles of the year, such as preparing for essay submissions and written examinations. The second core focus addressed eight case studies illustrating the operationalization of concepts and theories through academic writing and research, as well as the implementation of media and communications-related methodologies.

Over the summer, seven GTAs were selected by the department to teach the series. Masters students were invited to register online for one of the seven weekly seminars. At present, 104 students are registered in the series and teaching is underway.

Next, we focus on the case study approach by providing a more detailed overview of the seminar series, and illustrating the teaching practice of one case study.

### Overview of the support seminar series content

#### *The Case Study: orientation and approach*

As mentioned, the core curriculum of the seminar series consists of eight case studies. Each case study addresses current, published media and communications research, including research-in-progress by Department faculty and doctoral students. Case studies are usually an abstract or short article between 250 and 700 words in length, distributed, read and discussed during class. Thus we avoid giving students additional preparatory work in their already work-intensive degree programs and at the same time, impart the value of class time itself. The case study-oriented classes include two on operationalizing theory; one on research question formulation; three on connecting theories with methods (and vice versa); one on using multiple methods; and one on applying theories and methods simultaneously.

In class, instructors give a brief introduction to the case study, relate it to students' coursework, and emphasize its importance to broader issues of media and communications theory, research and practice. Accordingly, the activities that follow prompt students to think about issues specific not only to that case study, but also to general theoretical and methodological issues of the field. However, since the parallel objective of creating this course was to maintain our early-career teaching opportunities, the suggested case studies are just those: suggestions; others teaching on the course procure and apply case studies more suitable to interests, teaching styles, student needs, or group dynamics. We have selected one of these eight case studies to discuss at more length and illustrate how this approach has been actually used in the classroom.

#### *An Example: Case Study II: Operationalizing Theory*

The primary objectives of the class are that students begin to understand how theory can be operationalized in research and critically address various operationalizations of that theory, thus learning how to 'put theories to work'. The case study selected was current research on Jürgen Habermas's concept of the 'public sphere' (addressed that week in other courses).

Three research abstracts that work with Habermas's public sphere were distributed equally among the students (see Gimmier, 2001; Papacharussi, 2002; Poster, 1995). Students read their piece individually, looking for which research object was being related to the public sphere (in these cases, the Internet) and how principles of the public sphere were put into practice in the research. Then, in small groups of those who had read the same abstract, students discussed the theoretical principles in relation to the specific features or claims about the research object. Small groups were then asked to explain to the rest of the class how the public sphere was being addressed and 'put to work' in their abstract. With the class in plenary form, a number of questions were posed that considered the abstracts' approaches to the Internet and whether the latter has the capacity to sustain or overturn the idea of the public sphere. Reforming in small groups, students were then tasked with brainstorming other ways of extending, challenging or criticising the idea of the public sphere. Students from different countries were invited to briefly describe their national media system to one another, then to brainstorm together ways that the 'public sphere' could be operationalized in those contexts. The class ended with an open discussion of what it means to work with, or operationalize, a theory, as well as an invitation to consider other theories in this manner.



## Class Observations

Students started with an individual task, followed by a small-group discussion, then by an open exchange of individual and small-group work. This process was repeated, allowing movement from structured to unstructured activities, and individual thinking to group-wide debate. With the material being new to all students, group dynamics were generally unencumbered by the need to have read extensive material beforehand, or to cite specific authors or passages. The likelihood of a few students having done all the reading and thus dominating class discussion was lessened. Instead, a broad range of concepts relevant to the public sphere were offered equally, which in turn, were paired with tangible aspects that either complemented or challenged these concepts.

## Conclusion

In terms of masters students' objectives, the Support Seminar Series creates an opportunity for analyzing and understanding the theories and methodologies of formal coursework in an informal setting. This is accomplished first, by presenting case studies of published research that complement students' theory and methods course material. Second, by leading students in practice-based work that unpacks, analyzes and begins to comprehend the underpinnings, objectives and outcomes of that research. Third, by paralleling this practical work with support for students' year-long academic requirements, including essays, exams, research design, implementation, writing and submission. Fourth, by developing students' analytical and critical skills, research planning and implementation, in tandem with formally assessed coursework. And finally, by exposing students to the additional perspectives of alternate instructors and new peers.

In terms of doctoral students' objectives, the seminars create the valuable opportunity to develop their teaching skills through practice and active learning, present relevant and timely material, advise students, and formatively assess their progress. Furthermore, this practical teaching experience applies towards completing the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education.

In the true spirit of student-centred learning, and without compulsory or formally assessed conditions, these seminars allow both instructors and students a low-key, informal (yet still challenging) setting in which to develop and build upon their respective teaching and learning ambitions. Future challenges to the Series include the development of formal and informal assessment methods, as well as year-on-year improvements to the Series in order to better address both our student-learning and student-teaching objectives.

## Biographies

Niall Brennan holds degrees in art history from the University of California, Santa Cruz and media studies from The New School for Social Research, New York City, where he worked for several years in publishing, advertising, and web development. Having also worked and lived in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Niall is currently finishing doctoral work at the London School of Economics on the Brazilian television mini-series' representations of national culture, values and identity.

Mehita Iqani is a PhD researcher and Graduate Teaching Assistant in the London School of Economics' Media and Communications Department. Her research interests include visual analysis, print media (especially magazines) and consumer culture. She is also the Founding Editor of online/offline creative submissions magazine ITCH ([www.itch.co.za](http://www.itch.co.za)).

Frédéric Lesage is currently completing his PhD studies at the London School of Economics in the Media and Communications Department. His doctoral research consists of a case study of an international arts organisation and its appropriation of experimental high bandwidth networks for the production and distribution of artworks. He is a graduate teaching assistant for the department and designs online pedagogical systems for the School. Wider research interests include organisational discourses in the creative industries and the design and use of new media standards for cultural organisations. •

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# 5 Projects

## Portfolios and e-portfolios: the creative challenge

// **ADM-HEA's review of the use of e-portfolios in the sector aimed to consider how e-portfolios can help learners showcase creativity and whether they enhance learner skills and employability.**

The research took place between 2006 and 2008, involving in-depth case studies in three universities and a small-scale survey of graduate and employer views. Although a wider respondent sample would have allowed findings to be more generalized, evidence emerging from all sources enabled the research team to feel confident that valid conclusions were drawn. Four themes emerged strongly from the research, as reported below.

### **The relationship between traditional ADM portfolios and e-portfolios**

To gain information on the role of e-portfolios respondents were asked to describe their views of a 'traditional' art and design portfolio and what this should contain. The question of an appropriate format and function for the e-portfolio could then be addressed.

University staff in all contexts agreed that the constituents of an ADM portfolio are firmly based on purpose and use. The prime function was seen to be evidential, enabling the documenting of student achievement, and the range of evidence could be very varied. ICT use was seen to have changed established formats for ADM portfolios by allowing a wider range and flexibility of content and presentation, but tutors remained clear on key portfolio purposes. The portfolio was "a mechanism

for displaying best work" and seen as a crucial marketing tool to get students onto courses in a competitive environment. It was also produced for the purpose of gaining employment by enabling potential employers to see student work, and therefore had to reference industry standards. The provision of evidence for audiences external to universities was a primary consideration, but a range of other uses was described including those related to student-centred and institution-centred activities.

There was a need for the portfolio to be a clear communication tool - "...to be homogenizing across a huge variety of media" (Tutor comment) - that is, to synthesize varied contents into a package providing a coherent overview of its creator's attributes. This ordering and synthesizing function was frequently revised - "...readdressed by its creator for each showing to a client, but you need cohesion, too - a format or style for the whole portfolio, because this underpins your personal statement" (Tutor comment).

The importance placed on individual ordering of portfolio contents reflected a commonly-held belief that ADM students 'personalize' their knowledge; they therefore need an effective means of demonstrating a creative 'personality' in their work. The portfolio should therefore show how - "...students personally interpret the required learning for their degree ... [so] you can see how this produces variety within one course" (Tutor comment).

Other significant attributes to be shown reflected subject-related qualities and identities (Logan,

2006) and included: "passion" and "enthusiasm"; a "solutioning approach"; "open-mindedness"; commitment to "a strong work ethic"; ("... doing what they do 100%"); and a sense of shared values with the professional design community (Logan, op.cit.).

Students also placed a high value upon the individual portfolio. They recognized it as a crucial tool for entering target professions, and a continuing aspect of their professional development - "After placement it [the portfolio] gets you a job ... it's going to keep on getting you jobs for the rest of your life" (Student comment). The individual portfolio was seen as a product with adaptable parameters that would enable re-ordering, re-selection and inclusion of material for diverse audiences. Using the portfolio to show progression was key for students, and they described it as a site for "demonstrating thought processes, drawings, finished products". The variety of contents enabled "...showing yourself off a lot more..." than any single type would, and they anticipated that potential employers would appreciate the mixed specialist media they had included.

However, there were disciplinary variations in the levels of confidence that students had in their ability to build a professional-looking portfolio using ICT - that is, some form of an 'e-portfolio'. Some worried about not being "technically-minded" and thought that it was easier for students from other ADM disciplines to develop ICT skills, especially those studying new media areas such as web design. The form in which 21<sup>st</sup> century portfolios should be presented emerged





as a key theme in the research, as respondents debated the ways in which the potential for representing work was changed out of all recognition by digital technologies, by the range of these to which they had access as university staff and students and by the need to make creative use of them.

#### The form of the 21<sup>st</sup> century portfolio

The 'e-portfolio' has been current in British higher education for some time and there have been several attempts to develop software packages that can address the diverse needs of users (Richardson and Ward, 2005). This diversity is noted in the literature on e-portfolios, particularly the dichotomy involved in using them as both a 'showcase' for achievement and as a demonstration of 'process.' The latter function is usually seen as concerned with documenting learner progress, and can conflict with the former one of showing optimum learning 'products', providing confusion about purpose (Butler, P., 2006).

However, in ADM contexts formal flexibility was a key characteristic that respondents regarded as desirable in a portfolio, which made them reluctant to prescribe the functions and form of any e-portfolio tool; indeed, questions were raised about the fitness-for-purpose of exclusively electronic means of representation for creative fields. Key to these considerations were the disciplinary variations that resulted in production of 2D and/or 3D artefacts, the materials involved and the ways in which the quality of these was evaluated. There were common instances in which sense-based understandings were accepted to be crucial in this, such as "...the feel of textiles" or "the smell of leather goods" - which could not be represented digitally.

The tensions involved in choosing the best ways to evidence work centred on the way that the formal issues involved in an artefact and its representation constituted "...two different things ..." for ADM respondents. Concerns were voiced about the degree of authenticity that could be achieved when using digital means to represent aesthetic objects originating in other forms and media, and this issue became a key theme emerging from the research. Similar issues have been commented upon in the literature, with Dillon and Brown (2006) acknowledging that 'the intensive media-rich nature of creative production

contexts is particularly challenging for ePortfolio application' (p. 420). This problem was designated as 'medium shift' by the research team, and can be seen as a consequence of attempts to extend the representational range of the e-portfolio to match creative needs. All the universities in the study provided additional help in negotiating this problem of 'medium shift' for students whose discipline areas traditionally relied less on ICT skills. They employed professional photographers where needed, established guidelines on quality standards for digital images of student work and took seriously their responsibilities in this regard.

Even where ADM disciplines demanded well-developed ICT skills, formal issues encountered during portfolio creation could present problems; for example, product design students were proficient in using virtual modelling tools but felt they lacked the "layout and ...typography" skills to professionalize their portfolios. Students commented on the problems involved in representing design artefacts or products which are conceived of and executed in one medium into another that has an entirely

rich environment inhabited by users in many ADM fields led to students' reluctance to learn "another" technology specifically for e-portfolio preparation.

In terms of specific ICT preferences, the trend was for students to describe the static, heavy and large computers that comprised most PC formats as becoming less desirable to use as they developed increasingly mobile forms of working. Respondents confirmed that they hardly ever wrote anything by hand now, except when they didn't have a PC that was "small enough and light enough" to be of use for recording information in college. On college sites, though, mobile phone audio recordings were the preferred method for recording lecture and seminar content. Significant tools were also provided by institutions, both in terms of generic and specialist software and hardware - for example laptops with presentation and word processing software, and Macs with more specialist software for design, photography and illustration.

Students demonstrated extensive familiarity with and deployment of user-owned, Web 2.0

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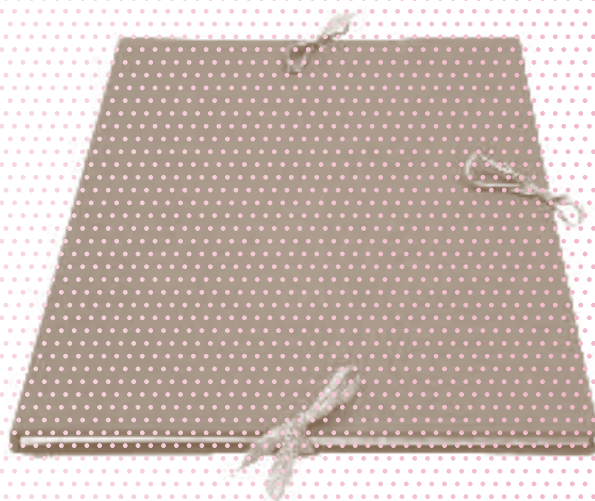
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different formal aesthetic. They reported that they lacked confidence in using technologies for representational means where these were different from the main media involved in their own subject disciplines. However, they also commented that this problem of "authenticity" in presenting work had to be balanced against the convenience offered by digital representation and its ability to communicate easily across wider contexts.

#### Current technologies and how they are used

Clear evidence emerged that e-portfolio use was seen by respondents as having multiple dimensions, and that these clustered around pedagogical, professional and institutional needs. When it came to undertaking or representing creative work, reservations were expressed by both university staff and students about the fitness-for-purpose of commercial software packages - whether for VLE or e-portfolio functions. It also appeared that the technology-

technologies for study purposes, and made little distinction between these in terms of their source (i.e. whether their own or university-provided hardware and software). Strong use was reported of specialist photography websites, blogs, social networking sites, personal websites and mobile hardware such as digital cameras, mobile phones and digital music/recording technologies. Apart from leisure and recreational use students used these mobile technologies for study purposes - e.g. to download and listen to podcasts relevant to their work - and described how they made their own selections of "Design Council podcasts ... crafts and textiles ones ...videos on skills demonstrations" (Composite of student focus group comments). They were accustomed to searching the internet for relevant resources on "...academic kind of things, for practice ...", using popular search engines and specialist interest sites for inspiration. However, more specific study uses were made of resources that tutors or others >>



recommended, starting with "...word of mouth and then you follow up yourself." This helped to reduce "time-consuming" mistakes and enabled well-founded searches - "It's like research is done for you every day." The user orientation of Web 2.0 technologies did not, however, mean that students were cut adrift by their universities to make their own way through cyberspace. Purposive efforts had been made in all contexts to ensure that students understood the implications and scale of the communications tools they were using, for example the potential consequences of exposure on social networking sites. It was seen as the role of specialist staff to "... mediate between ... the requirements [of ] ... official [technologies and] ... user-ownership, e.g. Web. 2.0, blogs etc." (Tutor comment, Focus Group discussion).

### E-portfolios and employability

Two categories of 'employability' skills were prioritised by students - more 'tangible' skill sets (such as the ability to demonstrate creativity, technical competences or conceptual thinking) and 'abstract' attributes (such as motivation, personal management or industry knowledge). By the final year of their courses, students had developed clear ideas of the kinds of evidence potential employers would want to see, using a wide range of digital technologies to develop and communicate about their professional persona and attributes; for example, social networking sites were widely used for developing a professional, outward-facing image and to find work. Students also felt that a key contemporary aspect was having their own professional website, although they were aware that in many art and design disciplines it would not be enough to provide a virtual representation of their work, and believed that they needed to adopt a variety of approaches. In terms of e-portfolios, 44% thought that they should be utilising one that they had been introduced to in the educational context, but only 17% were doing so. Overall their portfolio (in whatever form, but usually to some extent 'virtualized'), skills and experience were seen by students and graduates as being the most important aspects in enabling them to gain work, while qualifications and awards were seen as less relevant.

The use of digital technologies that enabled transitions into work was usually undertaken with staff support, and tutors made extensive efforts to ensure that employers' needs were met,

and to keep an eye on changes in this regard. It was felt by staff that this had a positive effect on feeding into and updating the curriculum, helping to embed and maintain awareness of the professional context in the institutional infrastructure.

Data from a small sample of employers illuminated recruitment practices in creative fields. Emails were the initial means by which employers expected applicants to contact them, anticipating that these would be accompanied by attachments showing examples of work. 100% of employer respondents used 'portfolios' for recruitment and 66% also interviewed applicants. Employers suggested that even at interview the portfolio is the most important element, although candidate personality and presentation were also rated highly. The majority of respondents recruited only graduates, reflecting the value placed on degree qualifications, with work experience also seen to be of high importance. For employers, creative portfolios needed to demonstrate evidence of professionalism, conceptual thinking and recent work by candidates.

### Conclusions

Crucial differences emerged between the ways in which those in art and design contexts construed the concept of portfolios and the generally accepted idea of the educational 'e-portfolio'. This difference rests on well-established traditions in art and design education and practice, so that the 21<sup>st</sup> century art, design and media portfolio is hybrid, reflecting the expanded range of media available for portfolio production.

The tools provided by in-house and commercial e-portfolio software cannot serve the range of creative activities involved in ADM disciplines. Rather than an 'e-portfolio' the idea of the ADM 'virtualized portfolio' is helpful, particularly in its support of communication and connectivity across wide contexts.

ADM students engage with a wide range of current technologies that support learning and evidence achievement. Their sense of user autonomy enables creative integration of traditional and new technologies for ADM students, and their personalization of learning includes the ability to personalize technologies in use.

The virtualized portfolio, hybrid in form and likely to change in line with technological advances, is the predominant means by which learners represent their work to potential employers. It therefore fulfils the function of the traditional art, design, media portfolio for the digital age and makes a significant contribution to supporting learner transitions into the professional working context.

### Cheri Logan

Director  
Evolve Centre for E-learning Research and Development

### Contact information

Faculty of the Arts  
University of Cumbria  
Brampton Road  
Carlisle  
CA3 9AY  
E: [cheri.logan@cumbria.ac.uk](mailto:cheri.logan@cumbria.ac.uk)  
T: 01228 400300

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Theatre Production project, Bath Spa University

Photo: Courtesy of Theatre Royal, Bath

# Effective work-based learning in Art, Design and Media

## Background to the project

The Arts Institute at Bournemouth, Bath Spa University, Falmouth University College and Plymouth College of Art and Design have just completed an ADM-HEA and Foundation Degree Forward (fdf) jointly funded project to identify models of good practice in the delivery of work-based learning in art, design and media.

Surveys were undertaken to explore and identify models for employer engagement and work-based learning within each Institution. These highlighted a wide range of activities which included:

- Employer engagement in curriculum design through Alumni and Industry Liaison Groups, acting as external advisors and working with course teams to design and develop the curriculum and setting live briefs;
- The integration of work-based learning into Foundation Degrees through the delivery of programmes and modules in a professional work-based setting, industry guest speakers, the use of industry standard equipment and modules or parts of modules delivered by professionals currently working in the industry;
- Embedding employability skills into the curriculum through building professional portfolios to showcase to employers, delivery of modules within industry settings such as professional theatres.

Building on the work carried out for the survey,

case studies reflecting the benefits and challenges posed by engaging in the work-based experience from students', institutions' and businesses' points of view were developed. These highlight some of the challenges involved, as well as giving practical details regarding the implementation of the activities.

Engaging with the project provided a great opportunity for those involved to discuss, debate and share ideas on what makes effective work-based learning effective.

## Arts Institute at Bournemouth

The Arts Institute at Bournemouth explored the use of live briefs and projects as a means to deliver effective work-based learning. Students on the Foundation Degree in Visual Communication course engaged with the Royal British Legion to undertake a 'live' brief designing a poster campaign for the Royal British Legion annual Poppy Appeal. Students studying for a Foundation Degree Interior Architecture and Design were tasked with re-designing a new office space in a converted barn for the RLA Group, a local company. For both projects, students had to demonstrate their ability to practice and apply a range of processes and strategies for initiating and developing creative design solutions as well as effectively communicating meaningful and imaginative ideas to visual and / or textual contemporary design problems. The companies involved in both projects helped set the briefs for the students, critiqued their work and provided work placement opportunities for students to develop their ideas further.

Feedback from employers, students and course teams, highlighted the impact that engagement with the projects had on student learning. Both projects helped the students to directly link what they were learning in Higher Education with the 'Real World'. As one student commented *"Sometimes being at university you feel that you are years behind people at work, but these projects made you realize that you were not that far off"*. Although studio briefs do mirror those of the workplace, having to present and engage with 'real' clients gave a unique experience in understanding the designer/client relationship and the competitiveness of the design studio. As one of the 'employers' said: *"Nothing as a student quite prepares you for opinionated clients"*

## Bath Spa University

Bath Spa University outlined the innovative approaches to delivering effective work-based learning within its Foundation degrees in Theatre Production and Graphic Design.

The collaborative benefits of working with a local employer were explored within the Foundation Degree in Theatre Production case study. The programme, delivered in conjunction with the Theatre Royal Bath, introduces students to the professional and technical disciplines involved in mounting commercial productions within an industry setting. Students have ready access to theatre professionals who provide students with up-to-date knowledge and hands-on experience of the theatre production business. The case study examined the spectrum of professional roles students undertake from assistant stage >>





Students at Weston College



Photos: Bath Spa University

managers, lighting designers, prop makers and wardrobe assistants on local theatre productions. The opportunity to use industry standard equipment and study professionally accredited training programmes sponsored by the employer alongside their course has also enabled the Foundation Degree in Theatre Production students to build an impressive portfolio of sought-after technical, stagecraft and production skills in a highly competitive industry.

The Foundation Degree in Graphic Design case study explored the benefits of a 'model' commercial design studio and the opportunities this model provided for students to share and test industry projects in a realistic work setting. Delivered at Weston College, the Foundation Degree examined the use of 'live' client briefs through its design studio concept to demonstrate effective work-based learning. Student projects included designing a brochure for a series of higher education taster workshops funded by the Western Vocational Lifelong Learning Network (WVLLN); a poster campaign for the Weston Arts Festival and developing a brand identity for a local interior design company.

#### University College Falmouth

As a specialist, practice-based institution, University College Falmouth offers a curriculum that is highly relevant to employment in the creative industries. All courses at Falmouth are developed, taught and assessed by course teams consisting of individuals with a wealth of industry experience, and the college maintains its facilities to industry standard. These contexts provide particular interest at a time when UK HEIs are being pushed to collaborate far more explicitly with industry, as it appears creative sector arts graduates are increasingly being seen as possessing the kind of creative, problem-solving and client-focused skills necessary in post-industrial culturally innovative economies.

The work focuses on two courses: BA (Hons) Illustration and BA (Hons) Journalism.

The nature of BA (Hons) Illustration means 'traditional' work placements are not appropriate within the curriculum, and other forms of off-campus learning are embedded.

However, the course has always been underpinned by concerns of employability - with

the curriculum considered a predominantly vocational one with strong links with the commercial market place: requiring students to develop a reflective personal practice within such fields as advertising, publishing, corporate work and journalism.

Within BA (Hons) Journalism, employability is not regarded as an add-on to the degree, but is explicitly situated within and throughout the course and embedded in the learning outcomes and thus the lived experience of the course. Employer engagement is increasingly built into the course through simulations and authentic practice, and this is enhanced through periods of situated learning, with students going out, as individuals, to learn on placements.

#### Plymouth College of Art and Design

In the two case studies submitted by Plymouth College of Art and Design, perceptions of achieving useful placements as a Fine Art student were challenged, and the benefits to the student, the employer and the institution of work-based learning were discussed:

- Whilst many academics believe that finding meaningful work-based learning opportunities for Fine Arts is difficult, the College refutes this. Students are encouraged to practice "*rampant opportunism*" (Programme Leader, FD Fine Art) when sourcing their work placements, yet still maintain their integrity as Fine Artists. Evidence suggests that the breadth of technical and conceptual skills the students learn to harness, coupled with their opportunistic natures, enables them to undertake an exhausting variety of highly relevant vocational experiences without compromise.
- The benefits of work-based learning to the students, employers and College were discussed: students gain invaluable work experience which helps shape their future career; employers are able to assist the future generations by providing an insight into the industry and are, in return, able to help the College shape future courses so that the work practices are constantly evolving and adapting to changing needs; and the College benefits from a tremendous amount of insight into the Creative Industries seen through the eyes of its students, adding another dimension to the structure of future programmes.

Whilst many institutions may be starting to move away from placements as part of their Foundation Degrees, the College strongly values the experiences that the students, employers and in turn the College gain from maintaining the activity in addition to work-related learning, and will, for the foreseeable future maintain placements as an integral part of their programmes.

All the project case studies are available on the ADM-HEA website at: <http://www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk/projects>

Contributions from

**Valerie Lodge**  
Arts Institute at Bournemouth

**Victoria Trachy**  
Bath Spa University

**Jacqui Boddington**  
University College Falmouth

**Claire Hucker**  
Plymouth College of Art and Design





Initial concept development, 'Constructing Constructs' project undertaken in collaboration between Motorola, Hong-ik and Northumbria Universities (©2008 Group 2.0 - Samuel Beeson, Philip Cuthbertson, Thomas Oliver, Christopher Holden, Northumbria University, UK)

# ADM-HEA funded projects 2008-9

Projects funded last year under the themed headings of 'transitions', 'community collaboration' and 'innovation', are now at their mid-way stage, and what follows are interim reports from some of the project holders on the progress of the work-in-hand.

The projects are due to complete in Summer 2009 with associated reports and other deliverables available on our website. We look forward to disseminating outcomes, which we expect will provide valuable insights for staff throughout the art, design and media sector.

## Making the Global Studio sustainable

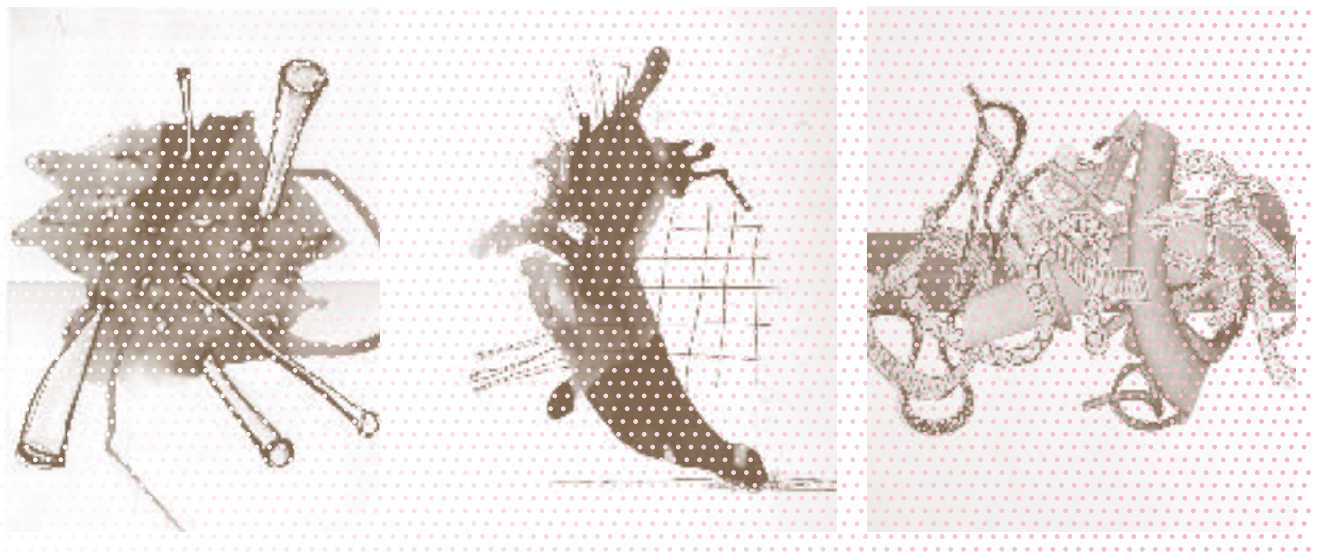
University of Northumbria

// Over the past three years the School of Design at Northumbria University has been experimenting with an innovative learning and teaching model named the *Global Studio*. The *Global Studio* is a teaching, learning and research initiative that links design students, academics and industry partners across the globe. For example, in one project last year staff and students from Northumbria University collaborated across distance with students from Hong-ik University in Korea and industry partners from Motorola based in London and Seoul. In another project, Northumbria students collaborated with students from Auburn University in the US and their industry partners, Great Southern Wood. This year Northumbria students are collaborating on design projects with students from Ohio State University in the US, RMIT in Australia, Hong-ik in Korea, Napier in Scotland and a multinational organisation from the Healthcare industry.

The aims of the *Global Studio* are linked with research undertaken on changes in the organisation of product development (Bohemia & Harman, 2008; Bruce & Cooper, 2000; Cooper, 1986). These changes highlight the importance of equipping design students with skills for working in globally networked organisations, particularly skills in intercultural communication and collaboration.

An important aspect of the *Global Studio* is the use of Web 2.0 technologies by students to communicate across participating institutions. Information exchange and communication is primarily undertaken via Wiki pages supplemented by other ICT technologies such as teleconferencing, video conferencing and email. The Wiki pages provide a common interface and space for staff, students and industry partners to collaborate on the design projects. The cross-institutional collaborations have enabled the intersection of various pedagogical approaches, as well as the intersection of both disciplinary and practice-based knowledges. This begins to draw attention to the importance of social and cultural context in the production of knowledge (Gherardi, 2006).

Furthermore, the incorporation of Web 2.0 technologies in the *Global Studio* has produced a number of unanticipated outcomes in relation to learning. For example, it has contributed to the development of student-authored content, thus enabling students to take an active role in their learning. The shared Wiki pages also provide students with an opportunity to learn from and with fellow students from their own and participating universities. A socio-cultural theorisation of learning, which draws attention to the ways students learn in and through practice, »



Examples of Ceramics student's work at University of Wales Institute, Cardiff

is being used to explore the peer learning in the *Global Studio* (Bourdieu, 1998). In addition, the design, delivery and assessment of the *Global Studio* provided the participating lecturers with a range of learning opportunities.

Initial research suggests that the *Global Studio* is contributing to the provision of an enriched learning environment that enables intercultural exchange between students, staff and industry partners (Bohemia et al., 2007). While the *Global Studio* appears to be enhancing student learning experiences, it also poses many challenges in terms of its ongoing organisation. Issues in relation to sustaining the *Global Studio*, such as embedding it within existing programmes at Northumbria, are currently being explored.

#### Erik Bohemia

Reader  
School of Design, Northumbria University

#### Kerry Harman

Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning  
(Assessment for Learning), Northumbria University

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## Making the Creative Process Visible

University of Wales Institute, Cardiff

// **The purpose of this project is to identify and devise more effective means of teaching the development of ideas in creative practice. If basic structures can be taught more directly, students can learn about the mechanisms of creativity itself, adapt them to their own practice, leading ultimately to more effective and focused artists.**

The main outcome of the project is the production of a range of Mpeg case studies that demonstrate ways in which ideas are generated, recorded and extended at key stages in the development of a body of work. This obviously involves a close relationship with the selected students to identify often-subtle changes in ideas and document evidence in the form of drawing, photography, ceramics or footage of process.

Initially, a formal agreement was drawn up requesting full use of students' work and working methods in the making of the films. Whilst not legally binding, this agreement provided an important teaching opportunity, leading to discussions about publication of the project, reference to identities and Copyright law. In this regard, the project offered a living example of professional practice to both the BA and MA ceramic courses, which could also become part of the guidance for delivery.

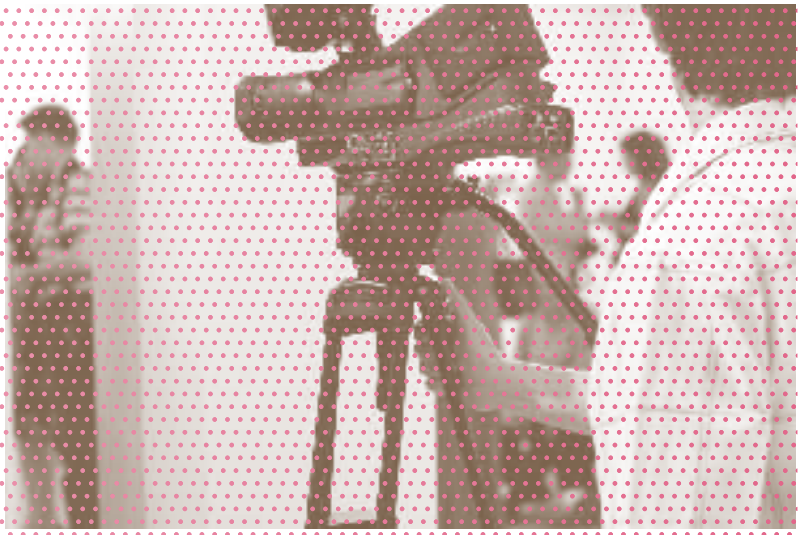
The recording of practice took place over the period February to October 2008, culminating in live interviews with students in their final exhibition space. Rather than documenting each sequential piece leading to this point, there had to be a broad format denoting basic developmental stages and decisions made as to what demonstrated these most effectively. For the MA students, the compilation of data became a part of weekly tutorials using the notion of creative structures as the basis for discussing their work. Students were also invited to suggest their own methods.

Whilst still imagery could be gradually compiled, documenting different processes proved more difficult as it was not always possible to be in the right place at the right time, particularly during times of high experimentation and in the event of 'happy accidents'. There were also instances when time was spent recording actions that later proved inconsequential to the final work. It became clear that guidance for the delivery of the Mpeg case studies would need to incorporate weaknesses in students' development as well as successes, whilst remaining aware of any ethical dilemma this presents.

A PowerPoint presentation has been made available to each student setting out their selected images in order of development, asking if there are any omissions or faults. The interview footage now needs to be edited and additional imagery added. This process will either affirm or reject developmental structures already identified and possibly add more. The important point to make clear is that such structures are already present in creative practice at various stages in its development, this project will simply identify them and make them visible so they can be openly employed by students enabling them greater focus and opportunity for ideas.

#### Natasha Mayo

Lecturer of Ceramics  
University of Wales Institute, Cardiff



## A Clear Approach and a Soft Landing: smoothing the path for the new student entering an industry-orientated discipline York St John University

// **The overarching aim of the project is to identify and differentiate a range of special difficulties facing students studying within the so-called Creative Industries.**

Our investigation is focusing on first year students taking the Film and TV Production Degree at York St. John University - a programme of study which by its very nature straddles various traditional conceptual boundaries (theory and practice, study and creativity, independent and collaborative work), and which occupies a complex environment within which academic standards and industrial expectations need to be both distinguished and set in active relationship.

One common problem is that many students regard the degree as a 'higher' training course that will catapult them into a career. Whilst we hope this is the case, it consistently proves difficult to successfully convey the specific skills and personal qualities (in addition to technical know-how) required for this to happen.

With this in mind, the programme arranges regular sessions with visiting professionals and practitioners who can reliably inform students on the 'State of the Industry'. However, the picture painted often deals a terrible blow to students' morale and sense of purpose. These sessions can have a depressing effect, and negatively impact on academic engagement.

These contacts are essential to convey the existing realities (employment, working conditions, etc.) within the industries, but they can be unpleasantly abrasive experiences for students who may be forced to radically reassess and revise their short-term (and even long-term) ambitions.

With this in mind the Project aims to examine with students the nature of their reaction to these 'external' realities, and explore ways of

helping them to make the 'inner' adjustments necessary for their eventual career prospects, as well as their academic success.

### **Progress so far**

Our starting point was an examination of students' prior assumptions and expectations concerning employment in Film and TV. A detailed Pre-Entry Questionnaire provided individual and collective benchmarks against which to measure future changes in attitude, and allowed us to identify a representative cross-section of students selected to reflect the widest range in terms of prior experience and career focus.

These 30 students serve as a Project Focus Group, allowing us to follow-up specific issues in a more detailed way. The use of the Personal Learning System, PebblePAD, provides students with an online journal facility for the collection of their thoughts in response to the Presentation Events and Q&A sessions we have held with various external speakers from Film/TV organisations based in the North Yorkshire region.

Individual interviews and group discussion sessions have filled out these narratives still further, and have helped us to identify and interrogate related issues such as professional confidence (its forms and sources), and the implicit conflict between business and creativity.

### **What next**

We are now planning events involving recent York St. John graduates who have made that other transition into the industry, either as novice practitioners or young entrepreneurs starting their own production companies.

The recording of group discussions is contributing to a DVD record of the process, and also serves as a point of mutual self-reflection in its own right, with students invited

to reflect on the changes they and the group are experiencing. The emphasis on personal narrative as a diagnostic tool and transforming 'medium' will be the focus for the next phase of the Project.

### **John Marland**

Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Arts  
York St. John University >>





Photo: University of Lincoln

## **'Choose Your Own Adventure' Lectures –** **An experiment in interaction within the lecture theatre** **University of Hull**

// The aim of this 'innovations' project is to develop and evaluate a series of interactive forum-based lecture presentations. An interactive forum presentation in this context involves the creation of lecture experiences where students can decide on content direction, rather like 'choose your own adventure' books. Building on from the development of these presentations the aim was to evaluate the student experience of these in the context of a BA based module focused on Audiences and Audience interpretation. In addition, the staff perspective in composing and delivering this different form of lecture experience is also invaluable to the evaluation of the experience.

A key theme of the research we are exploring at the present moment focuses on student motivation and participation. As lecturers we are each interested in how we can more effectively engage our students in different learning contexts. This project is an opportunity to explore a dynamic new approach to teaching, which appears to offer an innovative way to enhance student participation in learning. In this project, we seek to answer a more general research question; is interactivity, or the ability of the student to select their experience of the lecture, a 'better learning experience'?

On commencement of the project we focused primarily on concept design, combining the knowledge of the delivery context, with the pedagogical challenges of making such an approach work in reality, with the technical challenge of producing the presentation media and the design challenge of dealing with the aesthetic. This presented the largest challenge to the project; realising innovative solutions, without making the creation of the media too onerous and thus negating the wider application of the approach in practice. Once we had decided on a simple consistent content pathway structure (which in essence involves students making pathway choices at multiple 'choice'

points built into the lecture) the content of all proposed lectures to be modelled was mapped into 'content trees' demonstrating where each choice would take the student. The 'content trees' were then used by the producer to deliver the six 'interactive forum' lectures within a consistent design template. The six lectures have now been delivered in the BA module.

At present we are in the process of eliciting the feedback from the student group through individual interviews. In addition, we are gathering the reflective materials from the lecturers involved regarding how the approach has worked in practice. The analysis of these results will form elements of research papers for different learning and teaching channels. One of the key outputs from this project will be guidance on how readers might implement similar initiatives within the context of their own learning scenarios.

**Dr Darren Mundy**  
Director of Studies  
University of Hull

## **Applying principles to practice:** **Developing civic journalism** **on a university-based community** **radio station** **University of Lincoln**

// Students studying radio production at the Lincoln School of Journalism (LSJ) provide a small-scale news output for the University-based community radio station, Siren FM, but this tends to follow a formulaic approach to local news provision along conservative mainstream lines.

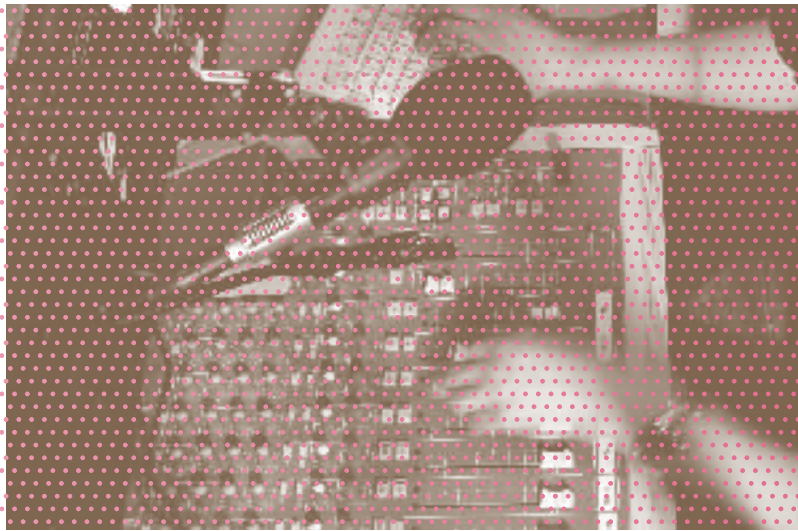
This project aims to adapt the principles of civic journalism to the medium of radio and bring in members of the communities served by Siren FM to work alongside students as Community Journalists (CJs) and so stretch the students' journalistic skills.

This builds on work at the University of Windesheim in the Netherlands where their Journalism students produce a web-based news site for the community in which they work. The tutors have found that this 'shop floor' news production environment enhances techniques and skills, particularly in newsgathering and treatment.

The main challenge faced by those involved in the project was an unexpected one. Despite the breadth of contacts, arranging a time when groups could easily gather was problematic. A different approach had to be found to both liaise with, and train, the community journalists. This has had a fundamental effect on the intended methodology and indeed the documenting of the dynamics of the relationship between the community journalists and the students.

The project's appointed trainer, a former BBC broadcaster well-known across Lincolnshire and now working with Siren FM, adapted the delivery of technical and journalistic skills to cater for the individual volunteer's confidence level. The resulting CJs have so far concentrated on traditional correspondent 'two-ways' in the studio, with just a few interviews to date on location. The most ambitious aim, that of producing radio packages (short features) in





## Media Studies and the Industry-Ready Agenda

their entirety, has not yet been attained but that is one of the main objectives of the next few months. However, the engagement with civic journalism by the students has been more successful than envisaged. One example was a non-computer community journalism news day, which was instigated in the Level 2 radio workshops. The students were required to make 'analogue' connections with the communities in the greater Lincoln area and source stories using fundamental journalistic principles, i.e. they had to use their eyes and a telephone! The resulting news stories were original, interesting and more directly relevant to the Siren FM's Transmission Service Area (TSA) than the standard mainstream fare so far delivered.

The immediate objective at the time of writing is to increase the confidence levels of the CJs and it is hoped this may be encouraged by a greater drive to conflate the student journalists' activities with those of the community journalists. This will then enable an analysis of the benefits to project participants from the perspectives of the students, members of the community and academic staff.

Any and all observations on the relevance of civic journalism to both community radio output and the teaching of basic journalism skills would be much appreciated by this project holder.

### Deborah Wilson

Senior Lecturer in Film and Television Production  
Lincoln School of Journalism (LSJ)

Project trainer, Dave Bussey, has featured the work of the Community Journalists on/ learning-and-teaching-projects-2008-9 his website, and some of the earliest work can be heard here: <http://www.davebussey.co.uk/cjs>.

For more information on these projects, please visit: <http://www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/adm-hea-projects>

// **'Employability' is an increasingly important issue within higher education institutions, demanding attention in terms of strategic aims and plans and teaching and learning and course development. As part of the comprehensive revision of the Media, Film and Cultural Studies programme that I have been involved with at Bath Spa University, the question of how to embed employability was central.**

A range of definitions and overviews of 'employability' can be found, with the following from the *Enhancing Employability* project capturing the sense of contemporary anxiety around employment, and the need to prepare students in light of this: 'In an increasingly competitive and volatile graduate employment market it is vital that students are equipped with skills that enable them to maximise their potential for a successful career'.

From February 2009, Bath Spa University is supporting the *Media Studies, Higher Education Pedagogy and the Industry-Ready Agenda* research project. This project will explore industry collaboration and employability agendas in relation to the media and creative industries. This specific focus on creative industries seeks to develop the HEFCE Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning project<sup>2</sup> on Media Studies and employability. Through research with industry bodies and higher education teachers and students, the project will investigate how broad discourses of employability and specific discourses of students being industry-ready shape and are negotiated in course design and students' approaches to learning.

The project will develop a cross-media perspectival approach that, for Mark Deuze, suggests what is common across various media industries is that they are examples of the production of culture. This approach is part of a move to focus on, "what people actually do when they work in the media, and how they give meaning to their actions and beliefs"<sup>3</sup>. Closely related, this project examines what students do to prepare for work in media industries and how they understand and make sense of their personal

development and 'becoming'.

The project is based around two broad strands. The first strand is concerned with 'transitions'. The first transition examined is from student to graduate, and media and creative industry aspirations, advice and guidance will be explored through exchanges with students, graduates and early-career starters. The second transition is from industry worker to higher education teacher. Through in-depth interviews with industry professionals involved in higher education teaching and former industry workers who have moved in to full-time higher education, issues of how employability, skills and students being 'industry-ready' intersect with teaching and learning strategies and course design will be examined. The second strand of the project will consider the approaches, priorities, and assumptions relating to 'theory' and 'practice'. Again, the aim here is to reevaluate the previous HEFCE FDTL project and examine the embedded and emerging approaches across higher education and industry to Media Studies as a discipline and the creative industries as a policy formulation.

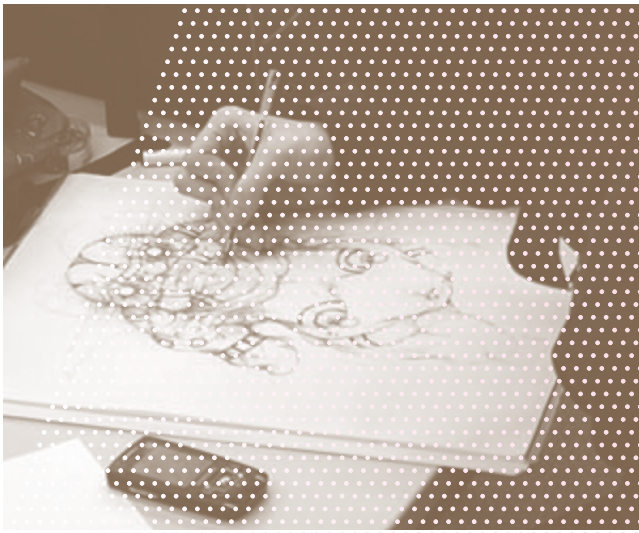
The project is in early stages and will run over the next year with a national symposium planned for Autumn 2010. The project is focused around the South-West of England, but all who are interested in participating or would like to find out more are invited to visit <http://mediaeducation.wikidot.com/projects>

### Daniel Ashton

Bath Spa University

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Games Design Student at University of Central Lancashire

Photo: K. Jeffries

## Skills for Creativity in Games Design

Karl Jeffries provides an overview of his recently completed research project

// In the UK, the development of the 'Creative Industries' has been a constant theme for government policy since 1997 (Crossick, 2006). Numerous reports have been written which espouse its value to the economy (DCMS, 2001; HM Treasury, 2005), and many initiatives undertaken to support this sector's growth.

Much of the focus has been on employability of design graduates for the creative industries: this is seen, for example, in the work of the Design Skills Advisory Panel (2007), specific National Occupational Standards (Skillset, 2003), and the development of Sector Skills Council accredited courses (Skillset, 2005). Given the nature of the creative industries, fostering creative talent remains a significant consideration.

However, whilst the focus on 'skills for creativity' is welcome, a number of concerns exist regarding an overly prescriptive interpretation of these skills. Indeed, for some, this is seen as an attempt to standardize curricula, and is symptomatic of a 'mindset' that believes UK Art, Design and Media education to be defective, and unable to meet the needs of employers (Macdonald, 2006).

Clearly, whilst such a debate is complex, two distinct positions can be found: on the one side, those that appear to voice the needs of employers; on the other side, those that appear to voice the needs of educators.

For example, in 2004, the Chief Executive of Skillset (Dinah Caine) highlighted her organization's intention to "...put employers in the driving seat"; and, through their Sector Skills Agreements, guarantee that future educational provision in the UK will meet the skills needs of business (Skillset, 2004). More recently, David Braben, the campaign spokesman for Games Up? (a campaign group, sponsored by some of the UK's largest games development studios and trade bodies, to raise the profile of the games industry in Parliament and the media), was quoted as saying "...95% of video gaming degrees are simply not fit for purpose. Without some sort of common standard, like Skillset accreditation,

these degrees are a waste of time for all concerned" (Lipsett, 2008).

Yet, in contrast, two years earlier, Professor Geoffrey Crossick, (Warden of Goldsmiths, University of London), in his speech to the Royal Society of Arts, highlighted that it was "...important not to assume that employers automatically know best what education their future employees need", and that a university education should be about "...developing people not just with the skills to meet today's needs but also the conceptual abilities and imagination to take risks that will generate what is needed in the future" (Crossick, 2006).

Alongside this division, a further concern surrounds the quality of research to identify appropriate skills; a significant criticism suggests the representation of educators in such research studies has not been adequately addressed and, as a result, the research findings are skewed towards industries needs above those of education and learners. It appears that for many academics within Art, Design and Media, greater emphasis being placed on practitioners' opinion of curriculum content (for example, through Sector Skills Council advisory groups) is a significant concern (Wall et al., 2006).

With regard to skills for creativity, however, this concern may, or may not, be valid; such concern, arguably, is largely dependant on the extent to which practitioners' conception of skills for creativity differ to those of academics. Whilst, anecdotally, the higher educational community, and practitioner community, may consider such difference important, quality research findings do not currently exist on which to base such claims.

The aim of *Skills for Creativity in Games Design* is to begin to rectify this deficit. Specifically, through an experimental study, to understand further the extent to which academics may differ to practitioners in their conception of skills relevant to creativity within a specific design related subject; in this instance, games design.

The final report is now available on the ADM-HEA website.

Part 1 is focused on academic conceptions of skills for creativity in games design. Ten academics, sampled from BA Hons games courses in the UK, participated in identifying, first, what factors they each considered important to creativity in games design; second, how, collectively, they rated particular skills, knowledge, talents and abilities relevant to creativity in games design.

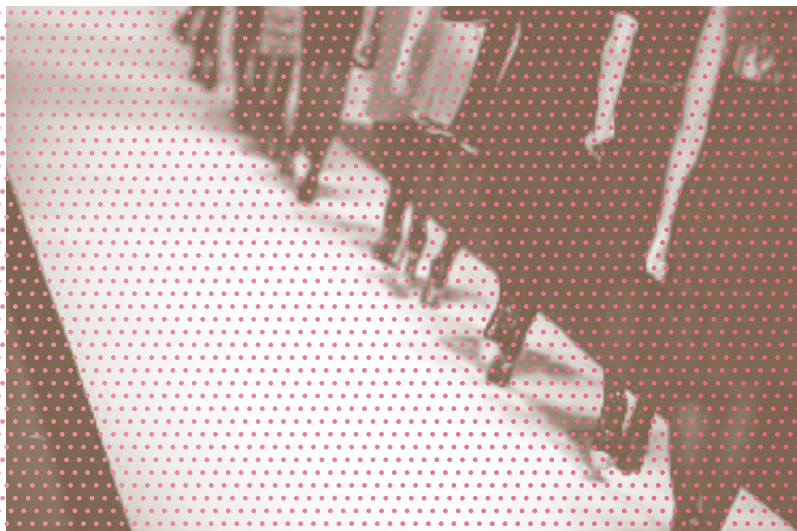
Part 2, using the same research methodology, theoretical framework and procedures, the focus is placed on ten games design practitioners' conceptions of skills for creativity in games design. Moreover, a detailed comparison is made between the findings from both groups: the full time games design academics and the full time games design practitioners.

The two main conclusions are, firstly, given the same research methodology, procedures, and theoretical framework for both studies, comparisons within each group, and across each group, highlight that games design academics' conception of skills for creativity show strong parallels with those of games design practitioners.

Secondly, the voting patterns in these studies show that certain members of a group can hold particularly strong views that are not reflected by the rest of the group. This is not to be taken as a failing -indeed, it may well be what makes them unique- but it does highlight that a focus group methodology could be heavily skewed if such individuals were able to exert their dominance. This lends further weight to Macdonald's criticism (2006) of The Film Skills Group (2003), as mentioned in Part 1. To this extent, the findings of the studies undertaken here reaffirm the importance of research methodology, for both the collection and analysis of findings.

The final report gives an insight into the conceptions and perceptions that full time games design academics and practitioners have around skills for creativity in games design. The caveat, however, is that caution around the generalization of these findings is important, and these finding should be considered exactly on these terms: they offer a direction on where to look next, and what to focus on; they are not a prescription of the skills required for creativity in games design.

<http://www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/adm-hea/projects/skills-for-creativity-in-games-design>



# Stepping-Out

// **Looking-Out** (See *Networks 06*) is a research project being undertaken by the ADM-HEA, commissioned by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. The research investigates the range and type of effective engagements between art, design and media departments and courses, teachers and students and, individuals and groups working in creative and cultural businesses and organisations. In particular, *Looking-Out* is exploring the contributions of teacher-practitioners to shaping the curriculum, experience and learning outcomes of art, design and media students. Amongst other questions, it will ask: do teacher-practitioners' experiences in education enhance their professional practice outside of academia?

In parallel, ADM-HEA has been working closely with a number of organisations to establish a fund to support a series of pilot development projects that will build on and contribute to the outcomes of *Looking-Out*. Several organisations have contributed to the *Stepping-Out* fund, they are: The Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning Through Design, (CETLD), the Arts Council, the Council for Higher Education in Art and Design (CHEAD), the Design Council, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and Skillset, the Sector Skills Council for Creative Media. The *Stepping-Out* fund has been used to commission new or extend existing initiatives and developments that have a focus on teacher-practitioners in art, design and media higher education.

There are five projects in *Stepping-Out*, one of these, *10by10*, based at the Artsworld CETL at Bath Spa University is already underway and reported in this issue (see page 31).

*The Reflexive Practitioner*, based at Nottingham Trent University seeks to assist the professional artist reflect on pedagogy and teaching styles and extends work already done as part of the *Reflexive Archive* project. Details at: <http://cms.adm.cogapp.com/projects/adm-hea-projects/visual-research-projects>.

*Visiting Design Professionals* is one of the strands of the Design Council's *Design Blueprint*. The small pilot in *Stepping-Out* aims to pave the way for a national database of senior design practitioners contributing to design education.

*Co-Working* is a Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning through Design (CETLD) project based around teacher-practitioners and work-based learning in fashion and textiles at the University of Brighton and the Royal College of Art.

*The Programme for Work-Based Learners* carried out by the Centre For Excellence in Media Practice (CEMP) at Bournemouth Media School will explore the experiences of senior media practitioners participating in online distance learning professional postgraduate programmes.

All these projects are co-funded by the delivery partners. They will provide new resources to help build greater levels of engagement

between teacher-practitioners, their students and the curriculum as well as developing CPD opportunities aimed at enhancing professional practice in creative and cultural businesses and organisations.

**Further information on the projects may be found at:**

10by10: <http://10by10.info>

Artsworld, the Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning for the Creative industries: [www.bathspa.ac.uk/artsworld](http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/artsworld)

CEMP, Centre of Excellence in Media Practice: <http://www.cemp.ac.uk>

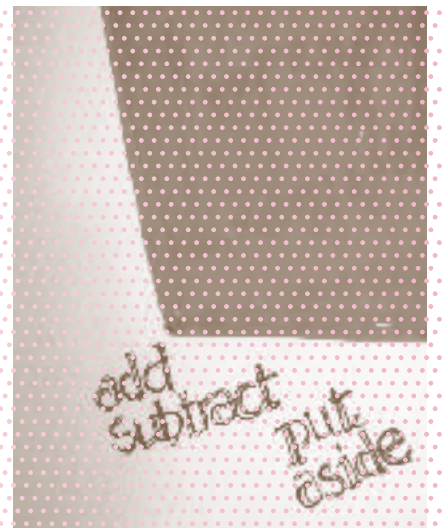
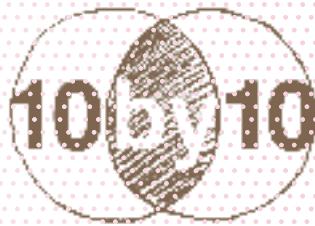
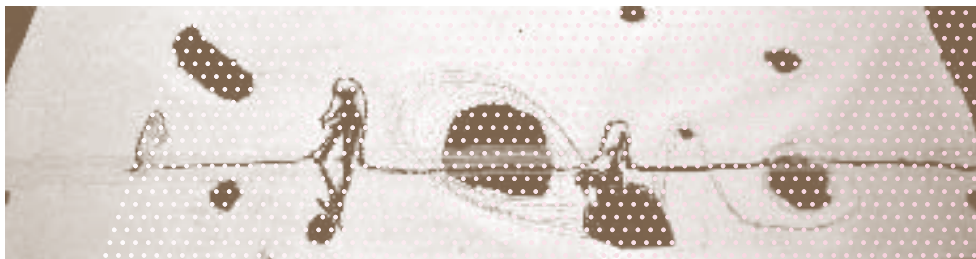
CETLD, Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning Through Design: <http://cetld.brighton.ac.uk>

Design Blueprint: [www.designcouncil.org.uk/en/Design-Council/3/Publications/Design-Blueprint](http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/en/Design-Council/3/Publications/Design-Blueprint)

Looking-Out: <http://www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/adm-hea-projects/looking-out>

Reflexive Practitioner: [www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk/library/files/adm-hea-projects/reflexive-archive](http://www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk/library/files/adm-hea-projects/reflexive-archive)





Drawings from 10by10 workshops

# 10by10

// **10by10, an ARTSWORK project [Bath Spa University's Centre for Learning and Teaching in the Creative Industries] was launched in January 2009 and will culminate in a public forum in January 2010. 10by10 is a series of ten workshops, delivered by ten facilitators, at ten institutions, designed for teacher-practitioners; those who work concurrently in professional creative practice and teach at HE/FE level. The workshops have a dual purpose; the participants' experience through the workshop activities and processes and; developing a body of research material about the teacher-practitioner role, and the relationship between creative practice and teaching, across the whole series.**

ARTSWORK's focus on the HE-industry interface, and how to develop students' learning as professional practitioners, led to considering whether the teacher-practitioner 'model' may be exploited and promoted to a greater extent, to benefit both creative industry and arts education. 10by10 was established in the belief that the role of the teacher-practitioner within arts education remains poorly articulated, and that there is an opportunity to consider the specific staff development needs of teacher-practitioners - not those of the artist, not those of the teacher - but those of the artist-teacher. The 10by10 workshops such as 'Arrival', 'Space' and 'Pause', through processes of book-making, mark-making and drawing, have produced materials which are expressive and emotive, yet one of the emergent

themes is that teacher-practitioners focus on their creative practice as the meaningful part of the identity as a teacher, but may be un-critical about the relationship between their teaching and practice.

10by10 aims to frame educational research from a creative practice perspective, through adapting visual and participatory approaches as an alternative to the predominant pedagogic discourse, (which often results in practitioners talking about teaching as a 'teacher' and not as a 'practitioner'). Each workshop, facilitator and institution in the series is different, bringing a range of creative facilitation approaches, disciplines and experiences to the inquiry, so that 10by10 is an emergent, collaborative process of participation and production. The project website is central to the experimental and transparent nature of the project, documenting each workshop's processes and creative products in the galleries, plus commentary from facilitator and participant evaluations, sessions plans and reports in progress.

There is a 10by10 workshop running most months, open to teacher-practitioners across the creative disciplines - further information and booking is through the website: <http://10by10.info>

## Antonia Walker

10by10 project leader and Artswork Educational Researcher and Developer.  
a.walker@bathspa.ac.uk



# 6 Reviews

## Critical Studies in Art & Design Education

**Editors** (ed.) Richard Hickman

**Publisher/distributor**  
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Bristol, BS9 9IDE

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May 2008

**ISBN: 978-184-150-2052**

**Price** £14.95

### Review by Steve Hanson, Lecturer in Cultural Studies, Hereford College of Arts

// The terminology used to describe the area this book addresses is telling: 'complementary', 'contextual', 'critical', 'cultural'. A string of 'c' words often raising heckles in arts education, from students and staff alike. 'Complementary' assumes a kind of adjunct to practice, 'contextual' a perhaps default socio-historical foundation for it, whilst 'critical' can slip between critiques of practice and critiques of, well, anything really, through 'theory', an already nebulous zone in itself. 'Cultural', as Raymond Williams has already shown, is perhaps unhelpfully one of the most sprawling words in the English language.

This spread of terms illuminates the way in which critical studies for arts teaching is currently not a fixed set of values or practices, something reflected in this collection of papers from the *Journal of Art and Design Education* (JADE). As apposite metaphors, they range from the provocative to the righteous - justified or otherwise - to the outdated, possibly a required field in an area often accused of irrelevance.

There are many instances when the justification and context within these papers could have been stronger. For instance, David Thistlewood's article contains some strange allusions to the often morally ambiguous lives of artists (Gauguin is given as an example). I began to assume this was a pastoral concern for younger students, but became unsure, as he extends this to describing the surrealists' pre-occupations as 'unhealthy', using an almost Victorian language of contagion that seems subjectively wide of the point. Leslie Perry troublingly writes of 'pure knowledge' and 'pure art', without, as I see it, a proper grounding. What worries me is the possibility that those who already do so may point the finger at contextual studies providers who themselves lack the ability to contextualise. Thistlewood's bibliography is a single note pointing towards Berger and Mohr's *Another Way of Telling*. I'm unsure how he'd fare under his own assessment with this. Nick Stanley's call to employ the language of theme parks will doubtless enrage those who rail against the hegemony of the language of capital, and have traditionally seen Art School as a place which can simultaneously resist and re-energise such spaces. Yet there are doubtless those who will welcome the attempt to engage students on more familiar terrain: what this book >>



occasionally lacks in structural coherence, it gains in the range of propositions it makes.

The provocational positions I find most engaging, as critical studies is an area in need of constant revolution. David Thistlewood's 'radical heresies' are, firstly, that critical studies should not necessarily inform practice, and, secondly, that practice should sometimes serve critical studies. I can already hear the gasps, some I think justifiably alarmed at the potential for 'radical heresy no.1' to turn into a green light for pedagogical self-indulgence. However, I do think that Thistlewood's urging could create a space for experiment and a type of engagement with practice which isn't merely our first 'c' word, the 'complementary'. This would have to be carefully managed though. He also points to students as future consumers of art, and although he isn't referenced, Bourdieu's ideas around gaining cultural capital ghost this argument. This other 'heresy', the unspeakable truth that few of our students become highly innovative practitioners, is gladly brought into the open here. 'Cultural capital', as Bourdieu knew in both theory and practice, is a transferrable, socially-mobilising skill. The points where this text and many of its authors encourage the theoretical and visual literacy of students through pedagogy is the strand that I find the most congenial. To enable students to decode images in galleries without the anchoring texts and narrowing interactive gallery guides is surely both a way of giving them critical autonomy and of re-approaching their own various practices.

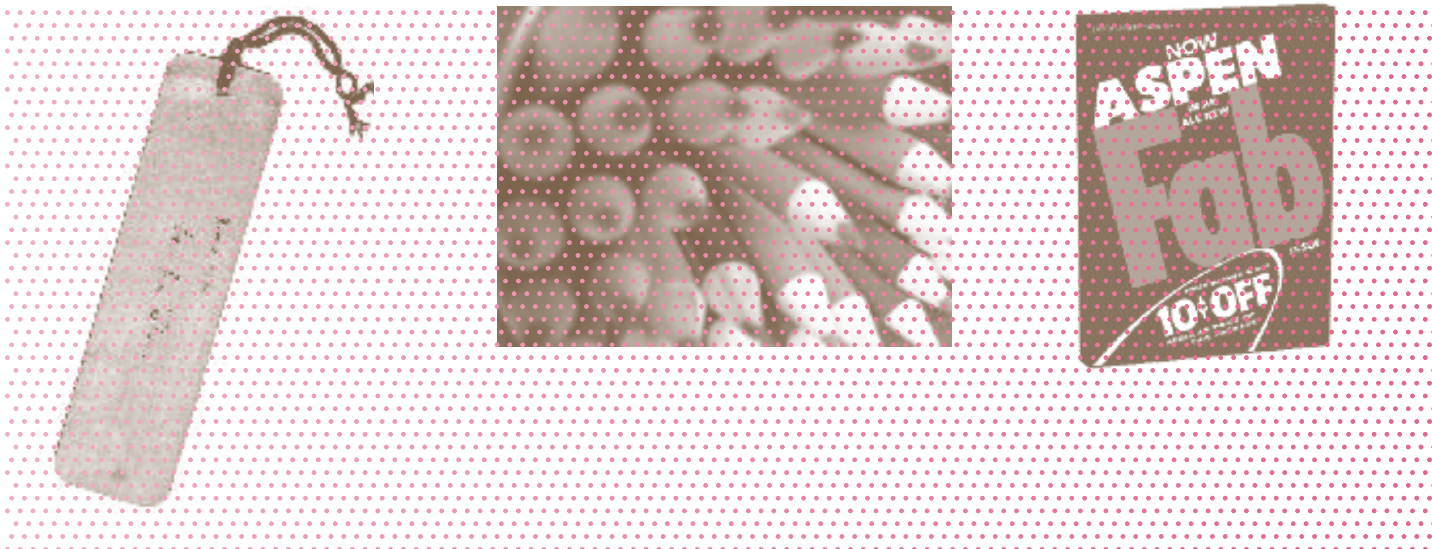
Sue Cox's paper is about primary education and is less relevant for the purposes of this review. This said, it is highly informative, as is Nicholas Addison's praiseworthy defence of teaching Semiotics within the Secondary Art and Design curriculum. This is very welcome. I know from an FE/HE perspective that it would make my work vastly simpler. We need a gentle slope, propelling students into more complex understandings, rather than a brick wall for them to painfully hit during the first or second year of a degree.

This book, although with its weak spots, is a welcome addition to an under-discussed and thorny area. Maybe with further discussion, our 'c' words could be reconciled, or turned into 'r' words, as a set of *reflexive repertoires* for teaching the cultural issues which penetrate and surround art and design making. Many of the papers here make worthwhile interventions to that end. If all the strong points made could be taken into consideration, perhaps we could move towards a layered delivery of critical studies within art and design which can simultaneously provide for future producers, consumers, practitioners and theorists.

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If all the strong points made could be taken into consideration, perhaps we could move towards a layered delivery of critical studies within art and design which can simultaneously provide for future producers, practitioners and theorists.

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## Short reviews

Is there a book, website, online tool, or other resource, that has been particularly useful in your teaching practice? If so, please write a short review to tell other readers of Networks about it. Selected reviews will be published here in Networks and/or on the ADM-HEA website. Please send your review of **100 - 200 words** to [a.d.crowe@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:a.d.crowe@brighton.ac.uk)

### Delicious

*Delicious* is an online 'social bookmarking' tool that can be used to store, share and find web pages.

It takes about five minutes to register and once you're set up you can build your own 'library' of web pages. For each 'bookmarked' page you apply 'tags'; 'key terms' helping to develop a classification system so that, a.) you can search your 'library' and, b.) other users can find web pages reflecting their interests.

Having bookmarked a web page, it's possible to see who else shares your interest in it and trawl through their lists of bookmarked sites. In this way, as well as through searching by 'tags', you can develop your collection of web-based resources.

*Delicious* has potential as a useful research tool enabling you to store websites and contextualising notes in one place and, most importantly for those who switch between computers, access them from any web-browser.

<http://delicious.com>

### Picnik

For those wanting to be creative with photo images but unfamiliar with Photoshop and other professional image manipulation software or who just can't spare the time navigating complex menu options, this online web tool may be the answer.

*Picnik* is free and easy to use and enables staff and students to upload, manipulate, enhance and share images online. It's a fast and powerful editing tool with a variety of creative effects, fonts, shapes, and frames. You can also crop, resize, and rotate in real-time. It works in both Mac and Windows and no download or installation is required.

*Picnik* also interfaces with several online image and social networking applications including Facebook, Flickr and MySpace. There are also some advanced manipulation options in 'Picnik Premium' upgrade for a fairly modest charge, however the free tools are likely to cover the majority of needs.

<http://www.picnik.com>

### Aspen: Multimedia in a Box

A seminal series, published between 1965 and 1971, *Aspen* Magazine's ten issues, originally presented in customized boxes, have been made freely available in web format. Conceived by renowned editor Phyllis Johnson, the series was purposefully established as 'a magazine of the arts', and exemplar of creative publishing. *Aspen*, like the 1960's West Coast avant garde magazine *Source*, represented a move by a number of arthouse publications of the period to embrace the multimedia form. Each issue of *Aspen* came complete with booklets, posters, postcards, recordings and even Super-8 films.

Enlisting the support of the period's key conceptual, performance and minimal artists, together with writers, critical theorists, jazz, psychedelic and rock musicians, the contributors' list reads like a who's who of twentieth century creative practice - William Burroughs, J.G. Ballard, David Hockney, Bridget Riley et al. Pop Art and popular media issues came with significant input from Andy Warhol and Marshall McLuhan respectively with the final issues dominated by Fluxus and Asian art.

With a mere handful of the original boxsets surviving, the archiving and digital availability of such a significant publication provides not merely an invaluable resource but also a glimpse into a very fertile period 20th Century creativity.

<http://www.ubu.com/aspen>

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- details of events, projects and resources,
- news of available funding,
- networking opportunities.

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You can contact the Subject Centre at:  
Art Design Media Subject Centre  
The Higher Education Academy  
University of Brighton  
68 Grand Parade  
Brighton BN2 9JY

Telephone: +44 (0)1273 643119  
Fax: +44 (0)1273 643429

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Thank you.

### **Contributors**

Daniel Ashton, Bath Spa University

Helen Baker, ADM-HEA

Bath Spa University

Carolyn Bew, ADM-HEA

Jacqui Boddington  
University College Falmouth

Erik Bohemia, University of Northumbria

Niall Brennan, London School of Economics

David Clews, ADM-HEA

Alison Crowe, ADM-HEA

Jenny Embleton, ADM-HEA

Debbie Flint, ADM-HEA

Rob Flint, Nottingham Trent University

Steve Hanson  
Hereford College of Arts

Kerry Harman, University of Northumbria

Claire Hucker, Plymouth College of Art & Design

Mehita Iqani, London School of Economics

Karl. K. Jeffries, University of Central Lancashire

Frédéric Lesage, London School of Economics

Valerie Lodge, Arts Institute Bournemouth

Cheri Logan, University of Cumbria

John Marland, York St. John University

Nik Mahon, Southampton Solent University

Stephen Mallinder, ADM-HEA

Natasha Mayo, University of Wales, Cardiff

Tim McClellan, Southampton Solent University

Darren Mundy, University of Hull

Catherine Smith, University of the Arts, London

Philipa Tunstill, Chelsea College of Art

Victoria Trachy  
Bath Spa University

Theatre Royal, Bath

Antonia Walker,  
ArtsWork, Bath Spa University

Deborah Weinreb

Deborah Wilson, University of Lincoln

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Art Design Media Subject Centre  
The Higher Education Academy

University of Brighton  
68 Grand Parade  
Brighton BN2 9JY  
Telephone +44 (0)1273 643119  
Fax +44 (0)1273 643429  
adm@heacademy.ac.uk  
www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk

