

<p>Institution: Leeds Trinity University</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 33: Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies</p>
<p>1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy At the first mention, researchers are named by title, forename, and last name. Thereafter, they are referred to by last name only. Category A submitted staff in bold. Non-Category A staff employed on the census date in <i>italics</i>. Other staff employed during the census period but not on the census date in normal text.</p> <p><u>1.1. Media, Film and Culture and UoA33</u></p> <p>Research being submitted as part of UoA33 focuses on immigration, integration, digital environment, and film and media theory and practice, and has emerged from a strategic aim set out in REF2014 to establish a Research Centre with a core focus on interactive storytelling, utilising the expertise of staff within media and film but with a tactical mission to reach beyond subject boundaries and work across disciplines, to take a transdisciplinary approach to projects and outputs. The establishment of this Centre – the International Research Centre for Interactive Storytelling - (IRIS), along with the recruitment of eight PhD students across the period of this audit, evidences a long-term commitment to providing a sustainable framework for research in this area and establishing a healthy and developmental research culture. The Unit is actively involved in a number of national and international collaborations, both academic and in the industry (see Section 4). The focus on practice-based research helps to bridge the gap between academic research and the general public, especially in relation to the potential development of community based and socially engaged projects (as described in our impact case studies).</p> <p>For REF2021, UoA33 consists of three 1.0fte staff members: Dr Kostas Maronitis, Dr Stefano Odorico, Dr Robbie McAllister and one 0.6fte staff member, Dr Jason Scott, within the subject area of Media, Film and Culture (hereafter MFC) at Leeds Trinity University (LTU). MFC is a distinct academic team within the Department of Communication, which is part of the School of Communication, Business and Law led by <i>Professor Catherine O'Connor</i>.</p> <p>In REF2014, staff in MFC submitted in UoA34 (Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management), along with staff from Journalism. However, a strategic decision was taken to focus on the new UoA33 for REF2021 because of the substantial film and screen studies focus of staff. The substance in this area is evidenced by a significant increase in the number of research outputs generated by staff members in UoA33 since 2014 (from seven to 14), a selection of which are presented in the current REF submission. In REF2014 it was recognised, in terms of research and impact, that film was the strongest area of the MFC team (representing 20% of outputs meeting the standard for 4*). Alongside the recruitment in the area of a new full-time staff member, McAllister, since the 2014 audit a significant volume of work has been undertaken in the field of film and screen media, including the introduction of practice-based research at undergraduate and postgraduate level, the setting up of a Research Centre, the implementation of mentoring for practitioners moving into research and the development of transdisciplinary projects.</p> <p>The MFC team has moved from a position of not having any postgraduate researchers (PhD) to having eight PhDs registered in the field of Media, Film and Screen studies starting from 2016: <i>Liz Cable</i>, Dr <i>Amir Husak (GTA)</i>, <i>Thomas Pollard (GTA)</i>, <i>Dionne Saville</i>, <i>David Thompson</i>, <i>Alex Vann</i>, Dr <i>Ilaria Vecchi</i> and <i>Kelly Zarins-Brown</i>. While no doctorates were completed in the census period, since then the unit has awarded two to date: <i>Husak (2021)</i> and <i>Vecchi (2020)</i>. This increase is aligned with the University's Research Strategy 2018-21 and aims to create a thriving Postgraduate Research (PGR) community, which was commended in the January 2017 Periodic Review by the accrediting body, the University of Leeds (UoL). Through its PGR community, UoA33 is contributing to LTU's aim of achieving Full Degree Awarding Powers, through determination of the right to award Research Degrees in the next cycle by demonstrating</p>

appropriate vitality and sustainability in the research environment at institutional and external disciplinary levels.

Work of the UoA has been developed both within the context of University structures and School-level structures. At University level, the Research Office provides administrative support for the institution and the Postgraduate Research Tutor and Deputy Postgraduate Research Tutor provide support, guidance, promote access training and work to develop a thriving culture for PhD students. The institution's Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee has oversight of strategy and all aspects of activity feed in through this governance structure. The connection to this at School-level is via the School Board, which has reports on local research activity at all its meetings. In addition, the Head of School *O'Connor* meets monthly with the Director of IRIS **Odorico** and the Department of Communication's Research Lead **Maronitis** to discuss progress of objectives and projects. The School of Communication Business and Law also has its own Research Ethics and Integrity sub-Committee with 12 members from all subject areas represented in the School, which reports to School Board and to the University Research Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee. More broadly, the discussion of research activity and objectives is a central part of the annual Performing and Development Reviews undertaken by all staff. These reviews provide an opportunity to capture and reflect on research activity and outputs in the previous year and plan activity for the year ahead.

With clear institutional and School-level frameworks, a healthy PhD community and a healthy Research Centre, a vibrant research environment has developed since the previous REF, with activity informed by and aligned to the University's Research Strategy. A key local-level strategic aim following the establishment of IRIS was to increase its membership. The membership of the Centre has increased from 12 members of staff in 2016 to 26 members of staff at the time of this REF2021 submission. This increased membership has had a positive impact on the research environment, with regular (normally monthly) research seminars taking place and one member of staff, *Cable*, registering for a PhD. There is also a more collective approach to the development of research projects, an increase in publications (traditional and by practice) and organisation of more research events. An example of this is the international research day focussing on research by practice that the Centre is organising for the beginning of June 2021.

In summary, the UoA is able to evidence that its activity has supported the meeting of aims set out in REF2014, as well as a major institutional strategic aim with regard to the establishment of a Research Centre, as follows:

- An increase in the number of research active staff and PGR researchers (mentioned above),
- An increase in the number of publications (up from seven to 14)
- The establishment of a stronger research culture (research seminars, postgraduate researchers and support for staff PhDs)
- Through IRIS, the creation and subsequent development of a subject area Centre for learning and teaching, research, and partnerships with a focus on media production and media culture.

1.2. The International Research Centre for Interactive Storytelling (IRIS):

The School of Communication, Business and Law has successfully established the International Research Centre for Interactive Storytelling (IRIS) as part of the research plan and strategy submitted in 2014. IRIS, currently directed by **Odorico** and Emeritus Prof. Graham Roberts, was established in late 2016, and launched with a successful symposium: IRIS Symposium Showcase (9 June 2016) that brought together international practitioners and scholars in the field of interactive documentaries, including Valerio Muscella, Kate Nash and Amir Husak. Furthermore, as part of a long-term strategy, LTU supported the Centre with an initial investment of £17,897 for a digital lab and the latest equipment for the creation of contemporary audio-visual productions, including: 360 cameras, VR equipment and large screens. Furthermore, the Research Centre is fully involved in the School's major annual event: Journalism and Media Week, which has

established a national reputation over the last 12 years for bringing some of the key figures in the industry to Leeds Trinity, giving an opportunity to the audience to listen to, work with, network and learn from a wide range of professionals in Journalism and Media. Every year IRIS organises a research workshop within this event and this academic year the focus was on: "How we tell stories" (November 5th, 2020).

In summary, the International Research Centre for Interactive Storytelling focusses on the following Aims:

- a. Nurturing a research culture within the field of film and media through mentoring staff members, supporting PG research, organising events, and developing projects.
- b. Creating a platform for development and peer reviewing support for publications and bid applications.
- c. Strengthening the relationship between University, industry, and society in general, hence increasing research impact.
- d. Pushing the boundaries of interactive storytelling through a variety of audio-visual forms.
- e. Developing theories, concepts, and practices in the field of practice-based research in film and media from a transdisciplinary perspective.
- f. Using an approach centred on equality and diversity, evidenced by projects developed within the Centre (see below and Impact Case Study 1) and the PhD programme in Interactive Documentary and Marginalised Communities launched in 2016.

The work of the Centre responds directly to LTU's Strategy 2018-2021, on five key Objectives:

1. Providing our students with training and education in research that is not only relevant to their areas of study but also equips them with lifelong learning skills and provides them with research-led educational and vocational opportunities and experiences that help them achieve their potential and flourish in graduate employment or postgraduate research.
2. Recruiting, developing and retaining talented academic staff who generate original research of high impact in their fields of study through external funding and/or applying it through research informed teaching and in a range of real-world contexts, including professional practice, to the benefit of society.
3. Securing a vibrant and sustainable research community for our students and staff, focussed on the delivery of the University's strategic plan, thereby enhancing the reputation of the University for excellent, ethical and impactful research across the institution, including research to evaluate and improve the student experience and pedagogical practices.
4. Engaging in research that is true to our mission, vision and values in collaboration and partnership with other Universities, organisations, professional communities and individuals that seek to make a positive impact in society locally, regionally, nationally and internationally
5. Organising events (workshops, "sandpits", etc.) to develop transdisciplinary research themes in line with current expertise and the funding landscape, and to enhance skills development for research active staff.

The Centre is overseen by a Steering Committee, of which both **Odorico** and **Maronitis** are members. Through mentoring (see Section 1.3), research support, research seminars and project development, the Centre has significantly improved the research culture and environment within the Unit of assessment and the wider MFC team. This activity addresses Centre Aims (a) and (b) above, and the University-level Objectives specified. The majority of MFC staff are members of the Centre (c. 80% - 12 out of 15) and all the staff submitting for UoA33 are currently members of the Centre. Academic programmes at Leeds Trinity have a significant focus on professional practice, particularly in the School of Communication, Business and Law and the Research Centre

supports existing staff at any stage of their research career. Importantly, it has greatly contributed to postgraduate research culture by welcoming the involvement and contributions of PhD students and nurturing their research outputs through mentoring, peer reviewing, PGR training (especially on technical skills) and technical support through Trinity Vision, our in-house production company and our Media Centre (see Section 3). This approach to supporting staff at all stages is seen as crucial in terms of the long-term sustainability of the activity of the Centre and of contributions to the UoA and is intrinsic to the way IRIS was established.

IRIS was formed to explore new and emerging methods of storytelling through new media and technology (items (d) and (e) in the Centre's Aims above). The Centre's activities involve both film production and academic research, hence promoting and facilitating dialogue between creative practice and theoretical knowledge. The Research Centre, which focusses on a versatile and innovative type of new media, brings together a transdisciplinary network of researchers, practitioners, and students in order to foster creative conversations around ground-breaking interactive practice. We believe that such a context and research environment provide the conditions for the development of a wide range of transdisciplinary research projects. The Centre also collaborates in synergy with the other LTU Research Centre, the Leeds Centre for Victorian Studies (LCVS), in a variety of ways, such as the organisation of joint research events. As Director of IRIS, **Odorico** is also a member of the LCVS Management Committee. An example of IRIS's transdisciplinary methodological approach, and its external and internal reach, is the co-organisation of the annual conference of the national British Association for the Study of Religions (BASR) in 2019, which was co-organised with Dr Suzanne Owen from Theology and Religious Studies (TRS), who is also a current member of IRIS, at Leeds Trinity, and associated with LCVS. The event included contributions from other IRIS members: **Odorico**, Roberts, *Tom Pollard* and *Vecchi*. This transdisciplinary work is facilitated by the organisational structures and institutional strategies that put particular weight and emphasis on collaborative research at Leeds Trinity. More information on this event is included in UoA31's environment statement.

At the time of REF2014, practice-based research was not firmly established within the School or the institution. It is therefore a significant achievement regarding practice-based research in screen media that the majority of the IRIS and MFC postgraduate researchers (PGR) registered and completed are currently working on practice-based research projects. The 'practice' currently developed within the PhDs spans a large variety of forms, including films, exhibitions, interactive platforms and linear documentaries, links with the Centre's impact, and was enabled through the selection of focused themes, aligned to the Centre's Aims and University Mission, that would particularly benefit from and be enhanced by practice-based work. In addressing themes of immigration and integration, the researchers in the Unit have been able to enhance and refine their practice-based methodologies, and address issues core to equality, diversity, and inclusion, supporting the vision and values of Leeds Trinity. In particular, they have been able to deliver Centre Aim (f) and University research strategy Objective (4), outlined above. This approach also enhances the Centre's impact (e.g., see Impact Case Study 'Socio-political, cultural, creative and educational popularisation of key theories and concepts on immigration and BAME communities').

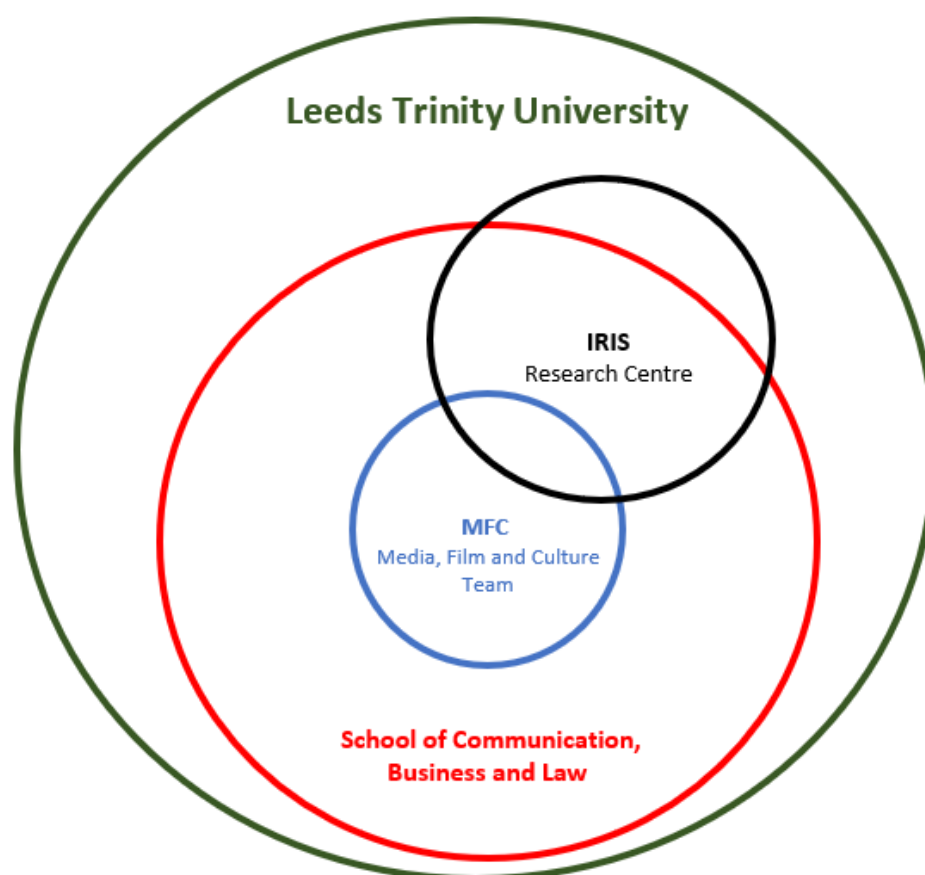


Figure 1: Position and reach of IRIS within Leeds Trinity University

Figure 1 above shows how the work of IRIS emanates from expertise within the MFC team but also draws in wider expertise from the School and organises its work so that there is collaboration and connection broadly within the School but also in the University community more widely. This reach and connectivity fosters a vibrant culture and a sustainable approach to developing the work of the Centre further.

1.3. Research, practice-based research, mentoring and future plans

Within the subject area of MFC there are a number of film and screen practitioners, current or former media professionals whose teaching is informed by their knowledge and experience of the industry and sector, some of whom are emerging researchers. Building on this foundation, since the REF2014 submission, a strong focus on research-by-practice has been developed. This approach has been adopted by staff members and successfully applied to undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. An example is the implementation of practice led PhD and Masters by research as well as final year's dissertations by practice (since 2017 we have offered students the option of submitting dissertations by practice comprising of a practical artefact and a 2,000-word written statement). Currently four PhDs are conducting research by practice: *Pollard*, *Saville*, *Thompson* and *Alex Vann*; and two completed their projects by practice in academic year 2020/21: *Vecchi* and *Husak*.

This responds to the University's research strategy objective to apply research-informed teaching, including: Research-led – where students are taught research findings in their field of study; Research-oriented – where students learn research processes and methodologies; Research-tutored – where students learn through critique and discussion between themselves and staff; and Research-based – where students learn as researchers. This is especially relevant to practice-based courses based on lecturers' research and research expertise. One of the impact case studies ('contemporary documentary practices') has a focus on research by practice and includes

practice-based outputs. The most significant development in this regard has been a change to our undergraduate final year dissertation projects where students can now choose to carry out research by practice rather than submit a traditional dissertation.

In order to improve engagement with research, as part of the University's research and impact strategy, mentoring schemes are in place and a number of research outputs from practitioners are already in preparation. Evidence of the success of the mentoring approach is the staff member currently taking a PhD programme mentioned above, the inclusion of *Barker's* film in one of the impact case studies, the larger number of outputs being submitted to this REF, and more external grant applications submitted compared to the previous REF review (increased from one to six).

Mentoring within the Unit is led by more experienced staff members such as **Odorico**, **Maronitis** and **Scott**, and focuses on the translation of practice into research (and vice-versa) through a strategy that includes supporting ongoing evaluation and assessments of research, effectively integrating research into practice, and disseminating information about evidence-based and research-informed practices.

Mentoring is composed of individual meetings (once a month at least) and planning, workshops, training, and seminars. At the beginning of the process and through regular reviews, the mentor(s) provide a plan for the development of a specific research project. The general aim of the Unit's mentoring approach is to build bridges between research and practice. The practice component at Leeds Trinity brings together practitioners to connect theory and research to practice and addresses how this could be expanded to become an integral part of the University's research culture, as well as supporting impactful outputs. The mentoring approach is collegial, and this is integral to the collaborative and co-creative ethos of the Unit itself.

Barker's mentoring support is a clear example of this process in action. Barker is a film and screen practitioner whose teaching is informed by their knowledge and experience of industry and who, through mentoring, has embraced research and created an output that will be included in the next REF cycle.

Over the next five years, the UoA will align with LTU's current strategy 2018-21 (and subsequent iterations) and work towards the following:

- Increasing the number of active researchers among our staff through recruitment and through providing mentoring via IRIS to practitioners and early career researchers and connecting staff with training provided by the University.
- Working with research active staff and those new to research to develop long-term publication strategies which target highly impactful peer-reviewed journals to increase the percentage of internationally excellent research.
- Successfully bidding for external research funding (one significant bid per year).
- Increasing external partnerships to develop research and impact.

Central to these plans is the further development of IRIS. By continuing and increasing the activity of the Research Centre nationally and internationally, expanding the number of members focusing on a transdisciplinary approach, planning, and developing research bid applications, strengthening and expanding current relationships and partnerships with the industry. The Centre will aim to become the platform where the majority of the Unit's 'environment' is facilitated, enabling impact / interdisciplinarity / transdisciplinarity / integrity for Unit itself.

2. People

2.1. Staffing strategy and staff development

A small group of staff are researching film and screen media and are producing outputs relevant to UoA33. They provide a nexus for a thriving, collaborative and inclusive research culture which provides support for staff appointed from practitioner backgrounds to receive support to transition

into research activities and ensures PGRs are part of research culture and activity. The focus on practice-based research has also filtered through to the design of our programmes in MFC on the 30-credit framework now being used by Leeds Trinity.

There have been some staffing changes within UoA33 during the reporting period. One staff member, **McAllister**, increased his contract from 0.6fte to 1.0fte, Dr Nick Redfern left the team before the census date and Prof Roberts retired before the census date but was appointed as Emeritus Professor at LTU. In this position, Roberts remains a member of IRIS and is continuing with the supervision of six postgraduate researchers (PhD) across the University. Furthermore, one member of the UoA, **Odorico**, was promoted to Reader during the reporting period (in September 2017) under the University's published promotions scheme and specifically on the research pathway.

The University has a clear and rounded approach to staff development overall and within the context of research in particular. The central component of this approach is the annual Performance and Development Review which includes research as a key item for discussion, allowing staff space to reflect on outputs, progress and achievement in the previous year and plan ahead to develop projects and outputs in the coming year. This process connects into workload planning discussions so that time is appropriately allocated for research activities. The School of Communication, Business and Law uses these processes to ensure that research activities are central to overall planning and to support staff in achieving their own personal research aims and that these aims connect with School objectives and institutional strategy.

To support staff progression, the University has introduced new promotion processes during the reporting period and an Academic Pathways framework to support staff in planning their career progression. The Academic Pathways framework articulates expectations at Grade 7 and Grade 8 through core strands of activity for all staff (Learning, Teaching and Student Development and Collegial Working and Leadership) and encourages staff to plan specialist activity through at least one of the following (or a combination of them) – Research, Knowledge Exchange, Pedagogic Practice or Professional Practice. These pathways then connect into our Grade 9/Reader and Grade 10/Professor promotion criteria. This development framework has also recently been enhanced through the introduction of a process for accelerated progression from Grade 7 to Grade 8 and one member of staff in UoA33 has been successful in this process during the reporting period, with research activity and outputs utilised as part of the application for progression.

A range of formal training and development activities are available to staff to support development as researchers. Some of these are run through the Leeds Trinity Research KE Office and there is also access to training programmes run by the UoL. There are also a range of informal activities for staff to engage with, including regular research seminars which are organised and run at School-level for staff and PGRs by **Maronitis** one of the members of staff submitting in UoA33 who is the Department of Communication's, Research Lead. These seminars such as: 'How to write a book proposal' and 'How to publish in an academic journal', are designed for early career researchers but can be beneficial to all staff working on research projects. Furthermore, they have a direct impact on the researchers' careers due to their focus on how to get published in academia.

Staff within this UoA have been successful in applying to the University's research support scheme for both financial support and research leave. There is recognition at School-level that competition for funds from the central research support scheme may mean that not all staff applications are successful. The School has, where appropriate and achievable, utilised its local staff development budget top-up conference funding awards or to provide support for staff to attend events and conferences which would develop them as researchers.

2.2. Research Leave:

During the period of this review **Odorico** and **Scott** have obtained funds to support their research. Furthermore, **Odorico** was supported by the University in undertaking research leave of three

years (while maintaining his position) in order to develop a research project in another international institution (University of Bremen, Germany) in collaboration with Leeds Trinity.

2.3. Research Students

Since REF2014 the UoA33 has registered six PGRs, accounting for 75% of the total number of PGR memberships within the MFC team, two of whom have successfully completed their PhDs in 2020/21. This meets a key objective set out in REF2014 to increase the number of PGR completions. All of the staff submitting in UoA33 for REF2021 are involved in PhD supervision. This is a significant development from REF2014 when the Unit did not have any PhD supervisors. Supervisors from UoA33 have undertaken Supervisor and Internal Examiner training workshops at the UoL to expand our capacity in these areas of work and as new supervisors come on board, they receive mentoring from those more experienced, with the consistent and invaluable support of staff in the Leeds Trinity Research KE Office and, in particular, the Director of PGR Martin Barwood.

Full-time PhD candidates have to meet their supervisors a minimum of ten times a year; for part-time students this is six times a year. Formal records are kept of these meetings and submitted to the Research KE Office to ensure there is a consistent and central record for all PhD students. As part of their supervision, PhD students can attend training courses organised by LTU, the UoL or externally and can attend all the School of Communication, Business and Law research activities, such as Research Centre seminars. PGRs also have access to training provided by the University of East Anglia through a subscription to GuildHE and CREST. There is a page on the virtual learning environment (Moodle) dedicated to PGR training, which includes a guide to recommended and required training at each stage of the programme, and includes links to all of these sources of training and support as well as training videos such as guides to using the library. PGRs are also made aware of *ad hoc* training events through announcements via Moodle and Microsoft Teams. This culture of structured development and inclusion in School and University activities helps to develop confidence and four PhD students in this UoA have already presented papers at major conferences in their field and published in international journals: *Husak*, *Vecchi*, *Pollard* and *Zarins-Brown*.

Our PhD students also have strong connections with their peers through an active PGR community (currently active online via Teams and Facebook), through which PGRs offer each other support throughout the whole postgraduate research study process. PGRs also have access to the full range of support services available to undergraduate students and these include the Learning Hub, which provides study-skills support through one-to-one advice sessions, mental health support including access to the counselling service and Mental Health First Aiders, and online guides and services such as Togetherall; and financial and housing advice through the Student Services Department and Student Union. Furthermore, one of the major benefits of working in a small institution like LTU is that PGRs have the opportunity to become closely involved in the work of the Department and Research Centre. This gives them the benefit of full involvement with the subject, immediate support and personalised training, e.g., *Vann* edits the LCVS research blog, and sits as PGR Representative on the School Research Ethics and Integrity Committee.

2.4. PGR publications:

PGR researchers are encouraged and supported to get their research published. Several PGRs have had their work published in peer-reviewed journals and collections before completing their theses. For example, *Vecchi* published 'Itako on the Screen: The Use of Visual Ethnography for Understanding How These Japanese Shamans Adapting to Modern Japan', *Journal of British Association for the Study of Religions*, September 2019. *Husak* also published an article: 'Exercising Radical Democracy: The Crisis of Representation and Interactive Documentary as an Agent of Change.' *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, no. 15, Summer 2018, pp. 16–32 and a chapter in a collection: *In Search of a Thirdspace* (in Bosnian), Revizor, Contributing author, Revizor Foundation, Bihać: 2018. Cited work featured in: Larisa Kurtović (2019) 'An archive to build a future: The recovery and rediscovery of the history of socialist associations' in

contemporary *Bosnia-Herzegovina, History and Anthropology*, 30:1, 20-46. Furthermore, Vecchi published two practice-based research projects (documentaries):

- *Nativity Scene in Naples*, October 2018, Horniman Museum and Gardens
- *Mamuthones*, October 2018, Horniman Museum and Gardens.

2.5. Open Access/Source

Members of UoA33 recognise the importance of creating an Open Access research environment and they have done so by disseminating their research online. For example, all practice-based projects are hosted online on websites and platforms. Public exhibitions like Robert's *Man with the Movie Camera* (included in one of the impact case studies) have also been converted into a website - widely accessible - output. All Robert's practical outputs submitted are Open Access. Furthermore, publications such as **Odorico's** article: 'The Poetics and Politics of Polyphony: Towards a Research Method for Interactive Documentary' (included in the submitted outputs) was published 'golden open access' in the online Journal, *Alphaville Journal of Film and Screen Media*, which adopts a creative commons license.

All members of UoA33, as required by LTU, maintain their personal profiles on the PURE CRIS system, uploading documents and links where copyright agreements allow.

2.6. Equality and Diversity

Some of the UoA33 members are also actively involved in LTU's Staff Equality Networks for women; staff with disabilities; international; BAME and LGBT+ staff. As per LTU's Code of Practice, all staff involved in the Unit's decision making for REF2021 have completed REF-specific Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training. In addition, all Leeds Trinity staff are required to carry out mandatory Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training every two years.

Promoting and practicing inclusion is part of the Mission of the University and underpins its approach to research and impact activities. The Unit's efforts in equality and diversity practices, including the decolonialisation of research and curriculum, have helped LTU achieve the Race Equality Charter Bronze Award in 2020 (<https://www.leedstrinity.ac.uk/news/archive/2020/leeds-trinity-university-receives-race-equality-charter-bronze-award.php>).

With regards to this achievement, *Barkers'* film *Re:Tension* (2019) included in one of the impact case studies, played an important role in achieving the REC Bronze award, as referred to by the awarding Equality Challenge Unit's feedback report and it is part of the Aftermath Toolkit. *Re:Tension* addresses the topic of institutional racism and the issue of retention amongst ethnic minority students within British universities. The film's research is grounded in statistical data that highlights the unexplained dropout rate of BAME students.

3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

All staff and postgraduate researchers have full access to media production facilities and equipment through the Media Centre at LTU. The Media Centre houses industry-leading production spaces and equipment to support researchers to produce high-quality professional work across all media platforms including web, newspapers, magazines, television and radio. Researchers can benefit from free equipment hire, bespoke media training, and help and support from the Media Loans and Helpdesk team. Our significant collection of industry-standard production equipment, including Sony FS5, Canon 5D mk4 and Black Magic Cinema Camera. The Media Centre also boasts a Radio Studio, three photography studios and darkroom and a TV studio. Furthermore, there are four editing rooms located throughout the Media Centre that provide staff and students with a choice of individual or shared space. All computers are connected to the central EditShare 48TB video server to give access to AVID, Final Cut and Adobe Premiere video editing packages. Some equipment, 360 cameras, VR headsets and professional cameras such as a Canon EOS C100 are exclusively available for PGR researchers and members of IRIS.

Our research by practice productions are supported by the institution's in-house production company, Trinity Vision, which is also part of the School of Communication, Business and Law. Trinity Vision is a professional media production company operating from within LTU. Comprising industry professionals and experienced student crew, the production company collaborates with IRIS, local businesses, organisations, charities and schools to create interesting visual content and build long-lasting relationships within the local community. The majority of research by practice mentioned in the impact case studies was produced in collaboration with Trinity Vision. This has had secondary impacts on the charitable organisations that Trinity Vision works with. This service is provided to such organisations for free or at minimum cost and is supported by Trinity Vision's work with for-profit companies. In every stage of the production process of multimedia products, Trinity Vision utilises the Unit's research findings and outputs on theorising and reflecting on practice in Film and Media. This approach has resulted in a more rigorous and self-reflexive style of production, production management and relations with external clients <https://trinityvision.uk/>.

To enhance this provision when IRIS was established the University invested £17,897 (as mentioned above) in providing a digital lab and the latest equipment for the creation of contemporary audio-visual productions. The physical space dedicated to this was as important as the equipment as it provided a hub to bring researchers, practitioners and PGR students together, a space which is used to facilitate formal project discussions and an informal sharing of ideas and practice. This space has proved a vital part of developing a vibrant and collaborative research culture.

As described in REF5a, the University has a fund to support colleagues in presenting their work at conferences, which all the UoA's members have applied to and successfully obtained support from in the period of this review (totalling ~£7,800 during the census period). Furthermore, LTU has an internal research fund support scheme that staff can apply for to pump-prime research at its early stages (totalling ~£5,800 during the census period).

The University has invested in research on the UoA through PhD studentships. Within the Unit currently three PGR researchers received a full studentship (which includes fee waiver) and two are on fee waiver.

Furthermore, staff and students have access to the LTU library as well as the opportunity to access further material via inter-library loans, and researchers can use the UoL Libraries by special agreement. The Leeds Trinity library includes an audio-visual section and audio-visual archives are accessible for free by researchers (on site or remotely). Each subject area has a designated Liaison Librarian, who can provide specialist advice on sourcing specific materials, and PGR training.

In general, for research conferences and seminars, LTU provides free use of rooms, free IT facilities and technical support, as well as support from the Events Co-ordinator, Press Officer and marketing team allowing the research events to reach a wider audience and to have visibility outside the University.

Increasing the research income is a key priority for the Unit. It will utilise administrative support and training within LTU to develop funding and grants bids, with the aim of one significant bid per year per research active staff member. In line with the institutional Research Strategy and to increase the number of successful bids.

During the census period the Unit successfully secured £30,000 (in kind - 2019), through IRIS and **Odorico**, LTU is HE partner of the Screen Industries Growth Network (SIGN). Furthermore, for her practice-based research Ilaria Vecchi was awarded £3,000 by the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation to conduct field research in Japan in 2019.

4. Collaboration and contribution to the research base, economy and society

Research in immigration, integration, and film and media theory and practice within this UoA aligns with the 2018/21 University Research Strategy's objective to make a contribution to society as follows: "We will engage in research that is true to our mission, vision and values in collaboration and partnership with other Universities, organisations, professional communities and individuals that seek to make a positive impact in society locally, regionally, nationally and internationally". The four staff submitting as part of this Unit are involved in a range of activity covering national and international collaborations, peer reviewing, journal editing and public events. Through this work, they make original contributions to the field and their work impacts on policy and perceptions of significant societal issues in the region and beyond.

4.1. Research collaborations and partners

Working with researchers embedded in external academic institutions and/or professional organisations supports our impact and knowledge exchange strategy and allows the creation of strong networks working in common areas of interest. Furthermore, the Unit's international collaborations have strategically contributed to the vitality of the research culture at the University and enhanced the reputation of the University and the School, which in turn can attract increased research investment.

Odorico is currently working with Dr Judith Aston (UWE Bristol) on a project that attempts to define a theoretical model for polyphonic documentary and to analyse the impact of multi-perspectival thinking within a practice context. Their collaboration brings together international academics and practitioners in the field of interactive documentaries. Their work was published in *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, no. 15, Summer 2018 – *I-Docs as Intervention: the Poetics and Politics of Polyphony*, which is included in one of the impact case studies and in the outputs of this Unit. The work group created by **Odorico** and Aston as part of their collaborative research meets regularly and is composed of currently 70 people coming from all over the world.

Odorico is currently working, with *Vecchi*, on a practice-based research project focussing on the city of Leeds. The researchers are developing an interactive portrait of Leeds that will help to reflect on the extent to which these artefacts could hamper or facilitate the movement of individuals through urban space – the aim is have this project included as a main output in the next REF in order to evidence the Unit and Research Centre's continuing focus on research by practice.

Odorico, through IRIS, is member of the Screen Industries Growth Network (SIGN). SIGN is a business-facing research project led by the University of York with the aim of trying to enhance the competitiveness of and future-proof the screen-related industries (film, television, games, XR and other digital media) in Yorkshire through a collaborative industry-higher education partnership.

Furthermore, **Odorico** was visiting research fellow at the University of Bremen from 2014 to 2019.

Scott was in the primary research team for the World Star Wars Project led by Dr William Proctor (Bournemouth University). The World Star Wars Project is a five-year study of the franchise from multiple perspectives which will culminate with a multilingual, mixed methods global online questionnaire. The first phase of the project, 'The Force Re-Awakens,' attracted over 1800 responses in December 2015 prior to the release of Star Wars Episode VII.

Scott has actively contributed to theoretical debates on the Disney franchise with two research pieces published in the very popular *inMediaRes*, which is a media commons project dedicated to experimenting with collaborative, multi-modal forms of online scholarship. The goal of the platform is to promote an online dialogue amongst scholars and the public about contemporary approaches to studying media. Titles of **Scott's** contributions are: *Disney+: It all adds up* and *Expanding Star Wars on Disney+*.

4.2. Public events

Over the years the Unit has organised a number of events in order to promote research, enlarge the network of partners and enhance the reputation of LTU nationally and internationally.

In 2016 **Maronitis** was invited to contribute to the exhibition catalogue of the international art exhibition *Documenta*. Documenta und Museum Fridericianum is a non-profit organisation supported and funded by the city of Kassel, the State of Hesse, and by the German Federal Cultural Foundation. Documenta 14 opened in Athens in April 2017 and in Kassel in June 2017. The title of the fourteenth Documenta exhibition (Documenta 14) is “Learning from Athens” due to Greece’s geographic identity and current immigration experience. **Maronitis** was invited as an expert of immigration and Greek politics and contributed a piece on culture, race and national identity translated into German and Greek.

From 2015 up until 2016 **Maronitis** worked as a guest columnist for the official radio station of the City of Athens contributing with three articles on EU politics, immigration and nationalism: *Immigration and the Question of European Citizenship*; *The Debate between Eurosceptics and Europhiles is over*; and *Public Opinion and the Political Reform of Europe*.

Odorico co-organised the International Bremen Film Symposium in 2014 and 2017 in collaboration with the University of Bremen and a local cinema: City 46. Odorico also organised an international workshop in interactive documentaries as a research method in collaboration with the University of Bremen, also in 2017, inviting guest speakers who are among the most renowned academics and practitioners in the field.

IRIS has organised several events over the years, including:

- IRIS Symposium #/Showcase (9 June 2016)
- Some 7s Clash (June 2017)
- Punk/DIY Aesthetics workshop (July 2017)
- MWMC (several events 2017 – 2019)
- Visualising Cultures: Media, Technology and Religion, conference (September 2019)
- Research seminar: The Medium is not the Message - Technology and Theory in Creative Practice Research – Dr Michael Schofield (June 2020)

4.3. Policy

UoA33 staff contribute to society in terms of policy and informing professional practice. A clear example of this is the following:

In 2020 **Maronitis** was acknowledged as an expert contributor by the Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology (POST) for submitting questions to the House of Commons and House of Lords around the themes of the future of work and the pandemic; immigrant workers and no recourse to public funds; welfare, public health and workers’ rights – the two questions were asked on June 30, 2020 and October 8, 2020. In 2019, he co-organised and took part in *2nd Generation: Music, National Culture and the integration of Young Immigrants to Greek Society*, an event funded by the bank of Greece and the Greek Ministry of Culture and Sport, that included academic talks and audio-visual installations.

4.4. Editorial roles and committees

Staff in UoA33, as mentioned above and in the impact case studies, possess a wealth of expertise across a broad range of research areas in the field of film and screen media. Recognition of this expertise is evidenced through guest editorships, peer reviewing (for books, journals and research funding bodies) and membership of editorial boards.

Odorico was elected in 2019 as vice-chair of MeCCSA Practice Network. The network champions practice within the Media Communications and Cultural Studies Association (MeCCSA), ensuring that those that teach, and research practice have a strong voice within the subject association and beyond. It supports and publicises events at which media practice is presented, particularly those in which the contexts of practice research, practice pedagogy and professional practice are foregrounded. All members of this Unit of assessment are also members of MeCCSA. An outline of **Odorico**'s current research into theoretical aspects of polyphony applied to interactive documentary practices was published in Three-D, MeCCSA's newsletter, in August 2020 (co-authored with Dr Judith Aston, UWE – work equally split between the two authors).

Odorico recently curated a journal issue: *Catalan Journal of Communication & Cultural Studies*, Issue 12.2, 202 – 'Documentary Film Mutations: New Opportunities for Social Change' (with Dr Fernando Canet from the Universitat Politècnica de Valencia) entirely dedicated to contemporary documentary practices.

Odorico is an elected member of the MINA steering committee and jury member. MINA is the world leading organisation and film festival for mobile creativity and innovation based at Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, Australia. He was also invited as a keynote speaker at a MINA conference in 2016. **Odorico** is currently working on a network project with Dr Judith Aston (UWE, Bristol) on Polyphonic Documentaries that.

In 2019 **Maronitis** was invited to join the editorial board of the *Journal of Political Communication (Frontiers)* based on his expertise as well as his "excellent publication record". He also reviews article submissions for the *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* (Sage/Political Studies Association) and the *Journal of Postcolonial Studies* (Taylor and Francis). Furthermore, he has reviewed research funding applications submitted to the ERSC and the Icelandic Research Fund.

Odorico is a Member of the Editorial Board and Co-founder of Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media and he is a peer reviewer for the journal: *Studies in Documentary Film* (Taylor & Francis).

Scott has peer-reviewed for:

- Special Section of *Participations* on 'Exploring Worlds' for Volume 13:1, May 2016.
- *Images. The International Journal of European Film, Performing Arts and Audiovisual Communication* (Polish journal) between 2015-2018.
- *Catalan Journal of Communication and Cultural Studies* 7(1) 2015.
- *MeCCSA Networking Knowledge* – from 2013 (mentioned in Environment statement for last REF) to 2019.

4.5. PG Researchers

PGRs in the Unit have secured academic positions in a number of institutions while continuing to maintain a research partnership with the Unit as members of IRIS. This enhances the impact that the Centre has outside LTU and creates a research legacy associated with the Centre.

Two of our successfully completed postgraduate researchers (PhD) have obtained academic positions: *Vecchi* is full-time lecturer at LTU and *Husak* is Director of Graduate Certificate in Documentary Media Studies & Assistant Professor of Media Studies at the New School (NYC, US).

They both still collaborate with the MFC team and, in particular, with IRIS. Furthermore, another two current PhDs have already been successful in obtaining a University position: *Pollard* is technician within the Media Services team at LTU and *Thompson* is Senior Lecturer in Filmmaking at Manchester Metropolitan University.

4.6 Concluding statement

The strategy of UoA33 during this census period has been to increase our number of research active staff members, to create and develop our research centre and to strengthen the existing research activity and culture within the Unit. We have seen opportunities for external and interdisciplinary collaboration increase as our research community expands and develops. Through stakeholder engagement, continued knowledge exchange and targeted application of research funding, our strategy going forward seeks to build on these achievements and further strengthen our profile externally. The strong foundation of impactful research we have detailed in our impact case studies will be the bedrock on which we continue to develop and explore new possibilities for wide ranging and meaningful impact in the world of academia as well as in the wider community.