Institution: Loughborough University
Unit of assessment: D27 English Language and Literature

1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy

English Language and Literature at Loughborough has enjoyed considerable growth since 2014: a **31% increase in staff** and a **ten-fold increase in external research income** to almost £2M. Building on existing success with the AHRC and British Academy, we have significantly diversified our funding from new sources (some unusual in the humanities), including NERC, EPSRC, ESRC, MRC, and Wellcome Trust. Strategic research leadership has established key strengths in Textual Editing, Applied Storytelling, and Digital Humanities, and emerging expertise in Genders and Identities. Loughborough's commitment to English is reflected in £615k funding for events, networking, partnership development, PhD studentships, and pilot research for external funding applications. These developments have provided staff, funding, strategic leadership, and an environment that has generated significant improvements in research and impact quality, including national and international research leadership.

1.1 Research structure

Our submission contains research from the early-modern to contemporary periods, from across English Language and Literature, Drama, Publishing, and Creative Writing. The UoA comprises **32.9FTE** staff from the Schools of Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) and Design and Creative Arts (DCA). In 2014, Unit staff were located in the School of Arts, English and Drama. In order to raise the profile of the Humanities at Loughborough generally and promote new interdisciplinary collaborations specifically, a restructure was implemented in 2019.

English became part of the new SSH, formed to promote stronger partnerships with historians, sociologists and colleagues in the Communication and Media unit which, for example, immediately bolstered collaboration in the strategic research theme 'Genders and Identities'. Alignment of Drama with other creative arts in DCA has inspired interdisciplinary exchange between, for example, user-experience design and performance practice, and healthcare and applied drama, delivering a step-change in practice-led research and providing an ideal home for our world-leading, interdisciplinary work in Applied Storytelling. For this REF, and as a benefit from the restructure, the Unit includes additional colleagues from SSH with research in Cultural Studies, Theatre History, and the Digital Humanities, areas cognate with English research.

In SSH, the English Unit has a Research Director (Adiseshiah) reporting directly to the Head of Unit (J.Cooke) and Associate Deans for Research (ADR) and Enterprise (ADE), all of whom sit on the School Senior Management Team (SMT). In DCA, Unit staff are represented by the Head of Creative Arts (Wilson) who works alongside the ADR and ADE as part of the DCA SMT. The ADRs and ADEs sit respectively on university Research Committee and Enterprise Committee, which are chaired by the PVC(R) and PVC(E) respectively. In both Schools, **research governance** is the responsibility of a School Research and Enterprise Committee (SREC), led by the ADR and ADE. SREC develops strategic policy and drives research and impact activity. Research performance is appraised via annual university-level quality audits, with priorities identified in the annual School Research Action Plan aligned with the University's 'Building Excellence' Strategy.

1.1.1   Research Themes
Our expertise and research strengths are organised into **four key themes**:

- **Textual Editing** includes the production of large multi-volume projects and single-volume scholarly editions, as well as the pioneering of new practices and technologies.
- **Applied Storytelling** uses storytelling as an inclusivity tool to introduce new voices, knowledge, and ways of thinking into the public discourse around key societal challenges.

- **Digital Humanities** focuses on the impacts of the digital revolution, including the preservation of and access to digital archives.
- **Genders and Identities** connects expertise across periods, including early-modern women's lives during English Civil Wars, masculinity in the Victorian novel, gender and sexuality in modernist women's poetry, contemporary feminist writing, and gender and race in contemporary theatre.

Textual Editing and **Genders and Identities** are supported as School-level strategic research themes, **Applied Storytelling** by the Storytelling Academy, and **Digital Humanities** by a research network that extends across five Schools. Unit staff additionally participate in smaller, largely period-based research groups (Early Modern, Cultural Currents [1870-1930], Contemporary, and Politicized Practices) which promote cross-fertilisation of ideas and methods across our areas of influence.

1.1.2   Approach to supporting interdisciplinary research

The Unit has built upon a strong foundation of disciplinary, period-based inquiry to engage innovatively with non-contiguous disciplines (as evidenced by the increased range of funders like NERC) in order to forge new responses to research problems and global challenges. This step-change has involved promoting interdisciplinary research through two primary initiatives:

- **Investing in interdisciplinary research themes**, which have received over £30,000 since 2014 to resource networking, bid-writing, and dissemination. Colleagues work with computer scientists (Digital Humanities); social scientists and art and design (Genders and Identities); and Environmental Sciences, Medical and Health Sciences, Geography, and Education (Applied Storytelling).
- **Incentivising staff to engage with the institutional 'CALIBRE' strategic research framework** which drives interdisciplinary activity across all Schools. Amongst its programmes, CALIBRE promotes and funds interdisciplinarity through the university-wide 'Communication and Culture' Beacon, the Global Challenge themes (particularly 'Secure and Resilient Societies', 'Changing Environments', and 'Health and Wellbeing') and the Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS), in all of which Unit staff actively participate.

Selected examples of interdisciplinary achievements arising from these initiatives include:

- Seven PhD studentships in two interdisciplinary centres for doctoral training (mini-CDTs) – 'Feminism/Sexual Politics/Visual Culture' and 'Beyond the Binary' – were awarded competitively to the Unit's Genders and Identities theme from CALIBRE's 'Adventure' Programme. The PhD projects include the fields of Education, Performance, Sport, Sociology, Digital Technologies, Fine Art, and Humanities.
- The *Loneliness in the Digital Age* (LIDA) project and three large mental health projects: *Creative Practice as Mutual Recovery* (AHRC Connected Communities); *MeHelp* (a current GCRF mental health literacy project in Kerala); and *What's Up With Everyone*? (an AHRC-commissioned project in collaboration with the animation company, Aardman). These projects work across disciplinary boundaries with academic and non-academic colleagues in the fields of Health Economics, Social Psychology, Computer Science, Design, Mental Health Studies, Health and Medical Humanities, Clinical Practice, Psychiatry, Animation, Young People's Services, Health Communication, Cultural Studies, and Music.

1.2 Review of Objectives and Research Plans in REF2014

Our research plans for REF2014 intended to extend the significance and reach of our research by:

- developing **collaborative projects** beyond the University with emphasis on **international partnerships**;
- deepening **interdisciplinary research**;

- nurturing projects arising from the growth of publishing, information, and digital technology.

In combination with our review of REF2014 results and under the influence of the University's 'Building Excellence' strategy (2014), our strategic aims for this REF period were to:

- develop a **sharper focus** on strengths and **refreshed priorities**;
- establish Applied Storytelling and Digital Humanities as **new research areas**;
- prioritise **quality over quantity** in publishing, grant applications, and collaborative projects;
- provide a **vibrant** and **supportive** research environment encouraging all staff to be **outward-looking, internationally engaged** researchers.

Our Research and Impact Strategy (2014-2021) also identified our four research themes to deliver sustained improvements to our research environment:

Textual Editing
Existing research expertise in this area was strengthened by recruiting three new staff specialising in publishing and literary archives, textual scholarship and editing, and book history. This resulted in five scholarly editions published in this REF cycle, including the first of eight volumes published by CUP (each around 1000 pages) from Hobby's major AHRC-funded project, *Editing Aphra Behn in the Digital Age*, which integrates digital and established editorial methods to produce new, comprehensive print and electronic editions of this Restoration writer.

A second major project was B.Cooke's AHRC-funded *Complete Works of Evelyn Waugh* (CWEW). *CWEW*'s methodological innovations now benefit the wider field of twentieth-century textual editing. B.Cooke sits on the Editorial Board of recently commissioned OUP *Complete Works of Ford Madox Ford* (*CWFMF*), which adopts the handbook devised for *CWEW*; *CWFMF*'s leaders estimate that *CWEW's* pioneering methodologies have advanced their own work by at least five years.

Applied Storytelling
The development of Applied Storytelling, with Wilson's strategic appointment in 2014, resulted in a portfolio of 25 **awards totalling £12M (£1.1M income to Loughborough),** delivered **across 21 countries on five continents**, and addressing major societal challenges in environment, health, education, and social justice. Liguori's appointment strengthened the area and led to the formation of the Storytelling Academy. Two examples of projects emerging from the Academy are: 'Drought Risk and You' which combined storytelling with hydrological science to inform better policy making around drought risk, and 'What's Up With Everyone?', which used storytelling and animation to increase levels of mental health literacy amongst young people. An MA in Storytelling commenced in October 2020.

Digital Humanities
Jaillant's formation of the Digital Humanities Research Group in 2016 has built a network of over **100 colleagues from the humanities, art and design, social sciences, computer science, and the library**. This provides a fertile environment for funded projects at the intersection of English and other disciplines, and has attracted research income of £288k. The profound challenges of how digital materials are encountered, accessed, and archived underpinned Jaillant's AHRC Leadership Fellowship (2018-20)**.** Research drawing on large-scale digitised newspaper corpora to examine patterns of information flow across national and linguistic boundaries formed the basis of Beals' AHRC/ESRC-funded project, *Oceanic Exchanges* (2017-19), which demonstrated the global connectedness of nineteenth-century newspapers, and the value of applying computational analysis to digitised texts. Digital Humanities researchers also pioneered a digital mechanism for tracking dance movements with a grammar model translated into a suitable data structure. Maiorani's CALIBRE-funded collaboration with colleagues from Computer Science and the School of Mechanical, Electrical and Manufacturing Engineering, in partnership with the English National Ballet, discovered more efficient ways to learn and

memorise choreographies, which led to Maiorani's recent large AHRC project *The Kinesemiotic Body.*

Genders and Identities
In this emerging area, research has been collaborative, outward-looking, interdisciplinary and agenda-setting. The 'Trans Lives East Mids Workshop' (2018) convened trans-community members, oral archivists, and trans-academics to develop research methodologies centring co-creation with trans-community groups. Two international **'Feminist Methodologies'** conferences (2017, 2018, organised by J.Cooke) shared new feminist research methods from Sociology, Gender Studies, English, and Art History, including work with end-of-life oral histories and trans-people, demonstrating how to co-produce research with hard-to-reach communities. Recruitment of three additional staff, specialising in gender and sexuality, is evident in increased long-form publications in this area: two monographs and four edited volumes. For example, J. Cooke's *Contemporary Feminist Life-Writing: The New Audacity* (CUP, 2020) is the first monograph to identify what she terms the 'new audacity' of recent feminist writings from life; O'Callaghan's *Sarah Waters: Gender and Sexual Politics* (Bloomsbury, 2017) is the first monograph to examine all of Waters' fiction, which is analysed through a feminist and queer studies lens.

1.3 Facilitating research impact

Since 2014, Enterprise (incorporating impact) has been embedded in all university activity, including academic contracts, promotion, performance review, and reward. Staff are expected to deliver impact from their research. In REF2014 our primary impact aims were to:

- raise the profile of impact within the Unit;
- increase participation in non-academic networks, partnerships, and collaborations;
- embed impact planning in research design and processes.

The foundation for meeting these aims was **strengthening impact governance** by moving from separate School Enterprise Committees to combined Research and Enterprise Committees, promoting collaboration with non-HEI stakeholders, and advising staff on impact opportunities, training, and funding calls. The delivery mechanisms were:

Im1. **embedding enterprise in working structures,** such as the Performance and Development Review (PDR) and research mentoring scheme. Colleagues are encouraged to engage partners and stakeholders from the inception of research projects and embed impact pathways.
Im2. **investing in impact** through Enterprise Projects Group (EPG) awards for pilot work, enabling the development of larger projects, and the award of study leave. Staff can also work with RADAR, the University's commissioning programme inviting artists to produce new work alongside Unit research.
Im3. increasing the level of **interdisciplinary research**, in particular **building collaborations with non-contiguous disciplines** and **non-academic partners**.
Im4. **promoting equitable partnerships**, including shifting the positioning of non-HEI partners from **beneficiaries** to **co-producers** of research.

Our large collaborative projects have incorporated significant non-academic partners from the public and private sectors, with the **Smithsonian Institution**, the **John Rylands Library**, **Aardman**, and the **United Nations Environment Programme** (UNEP) as selected examples. We developed storytelling projects using the Smithsonian's digital collections and have organised the first of two international conferences with them to increase mental health literacy amongst young people. With UNEP we engaged in GCRF projects exploring creative interventions to promote sustainable transport solutions in urban East Africa. This led to a more publicly engaged and outward-facing research culture, enhancing the Unit's impact range.

1.3.1. How the impact case studies relate to our approach to achieving impact
Our approach to achieving impact is exemplified by our ICSs. All benefited from the support detailed above and are new for REF2021. Each exhibits alignment with our research themes, and evidences interdisciplinarity: ICS1 with environmental sciences, ICS2 with education, and ICS3 with history and the health humanities.

ICS1 'Increasing Active Citizenship and Community Action through Applied Storytelling' exemplifies our promotion of interdisciplinary research across non-contiguous disciplines (Im3), and equitable partnerships with non-academic organisations (Im4), especially in low-to-middle income countries. These practices were embedded from conception through to dissemination and continuity. The ICS demonstrates lasting real-world impact through co-creation in equitable partnerships with community-level NGOs in East Africa. This model addressed challenges set by our partners who co-developed the project, and tackles wider societal priorities, such as UN Sustainable Development Goals.

ICS2 'Transforming Educational Practices through Digital Storytelling for Hard-to-Reach Groups across the US and Europe' illustrates the embedding of impact through mentoring (Im1), as well as the promotion of interdisciplinary collaborations (Im3). The underpinning research was undertaken by an ECR mentored through securing AHRC funding to develop partnerships with the Smithsonian Institution and partner colleges, and funding from the European Commission to partner with heritage, education, and training providers across Europe. Promoting equitable partnerships (Im4), where non-academic collaborators co-produce research, embedded impact into the research itself, resulting in, for example, the adoption of digital storytelling as a core skill for adult learners by the Regional Government of Andalusia in Spain.

ICS3 'Enriching Staff and Public Understanding of Women's History through Events, Exhibitions, and Creative Activities at the National Civil War Centre' results from our partnership (Im4) with the National Civil War Centre (NCWC), supported by research mentoring (Im1) and internal investment (Im2). Both ICS authors received six-month fellowships during the census period to develop the underpinning research. Collaborative activities, networking events, and a film-recording were enabled by £2,600 of School, EPG, and Marketing funding. This included resourcing two symposia ('Honest Labour', 2019; 'Aiding Upright Births', 2020) which facilitated knowledge exchange between ICS authors and NCWC staff. Impact-related activities were embedded into the research process, and our dynamic partnership with the NCWC will continue beyond this REF cycle.

1.4. Research and Impact Objectives and Plans for the Next Five Years

Our strategy for 2021-2025 commits to establishing our research and impact as **world-leading, agenda-setting, and responsive to post-Covid, post-Brexit challenges.** We will exploit opportunities for new collaborations with social scientists, historians, and designers enabled by the School restructure, and are determined to produce research that influences the world beyond academia.

1) **Research themes**: step changes in each area will be enabled by focusing investment in key specialisms:

   - **Textual Editing:** develop, participate in, and advise on large-scale editing projects (e.g., the OUP Ford Madox Ford project) as well as individual scholarly editions, develop innovative methodologies, and establish a centre of excellence to pioneer and disseminate best practice, including the digital tools required to transform this field.
   - **Applied Storytelling:** deliver a package of provision through the Storytelling Academy that expands PGR numbers and our PGT offering, creates a new CPD provision to engage with external partners, and builds upon successes with NERC and existing international partnerships to co-develop new environmental projects responding to UN Sustainable Development Goals.

- **Digital Humanities:** support Maiorani's UK-German collaboration with Bremen University and the English National Ballet as part of the project, *The Kinesemiotic Body* (AHRC, UK £337k Germany €346k, 2021-24); develop international collaborations with cultural organisations (such as the British Library and the National Library of Ireland) and computer scientists (responding to UKRI's cross-disciplinary schemes), co-develop research that tackles big questions, including the application of AI to the human sphere, and expand PGR numbers through projects co-supervised with STEM colleagues.
- **Genders and Identities:** develop partnerships with social scientists and non-HEI organisations, such as Notts Trans Hub, to engage with the gendered dimensions of a post-Covid, post-Brexit cultural landscape, through, for example, participation in 'Midlands Innovation' (partnership of the Midlands' eight research-intensive universities) whose 'Inclusive Transformation' theme is specifically targeted at the humanities and social sciences.

2) **Health Humanities:** strategic investment in this new theme will enhance our research in mental health, women's health (including pregnancy and childbirth), disability, diet, ageing, longevity, and old age. We will provide strategic leadership within the Loughborough Community for Research in Mental Health (established by Unit staff in 2019), which networks researchers from across the University working on mental health from arts, medical, scientific, and health humanities perspectives.

3) **Research Funding**: we will exploit opportunities for our research themes arising from cross-council funding, including increased participation in larger consortia. Through an existing relationship with Uppsala University, we will target the Nordic Cultures Fund and the British Council to support a growing international agenda, and prioritise the Wellcome Trust to support research in the Health Humanities. Achieving a diversity of funding will enable us to share our expertise more widely, affording us opportunities to partner with national organisations such as the Mental Health Foundation and Age UK, which provide access to communities with limited resources.

4) **Internationalisation**: our ambitions for Applied Storytelling include expanding, post-Brexit, our existing European partnerships by working with, for example, SWEDESD, a research Centre for environmental sustainability and development at Uppsala University (Sweden), Roma Tre University, and the British Council in Russia, with whom we have a track record of collaboration on which to build. Building on the experience and success of Applied Storytelling, we will develop new international partnerships and networks across all our research strengths, by targeting GCRF, Newton Fund, and Leverhulme Visiting Professorships to secure our position as global leaders.

5) **PGR:** we will strengthen our base for PGR students and further grow our PGR population by targeting internal doctoral training studentships and the AHRC's interdisciplinary calls. We seek to attract PGRs across our key themes, particularly the Health Humanities, by prioritising the Wellcome Trust, as well as Leverhulme Doctoral Studentships, AHRC collaborative doctoral partnerships, TECHNE, and an AHRC Midlands4Cities DTP application.

1.5 Open Research Environment

The University has been a pioneer of the 'Open Agenda', actively supporting repositories for text-based outputs (since 2005) and data (since 2015), now unified (2019) in a single Research Repository. We benefit from the Repository's flexibility, enabling sharing of outputs in many formats, including images, videos, animations, software code, with associated digital object identifiers. This has facilitated open access for creative practice and performance elements, enabling dissemination in a manner previously impossible. Our researchers work with the University Research Data Manager to develop data plans.

Beals and Fry are pioneers of open research and members of the University Open Research Working Group. Beals delivered Open Research workshops from 2016-20, including postgraduate training workshops aimed at encouraging open data methods, and a weekly Python training programme on developing open methods and reproducible datasets/methods of corpus analysis. Fry contributes to the Research England funded COPIM project, a consortium of universities and scholar-led publishers developing experimental models for open access monographs.

1.6 A Culture of Research Integrity

The University's Ethical Policy Framework is the foundation of the Unit's culture of research integrity. Research leaders ensure adherence to this Framework in the nature, conduct, dissemination and end-use of research. They are responsible for conducting ethics checks on all proposed projects and routing necessary approvals through Ethics Committees. Our UoA has a robust structure designed to support research integrity. A designated staff member signs off Ethical Clearance for every new research project conducted by staff and PGR students, as well as serving as the first contact for any projects requiring full ethical clearance.

We actively advocate against unethical research practices. Based on her externally funded project on researchers' open access behaviours, **Fry de-mystified OA publishing** and its perceived association with predatory publishing in a series of articles in leading journals (2015-19) and provides advice to Unit members via the SREC.

2. People

2.1 Staffing and Recruitment Policy

All academic staff contribute to teaching, research, and enterprise activities. Staff have 34% of workload ring-fenced for research, with additions for PGR supervision and managing Research Associates. We expect and incentivise a collegial and collaborative approach to work from the earliest career stages and, as careers progress, we also expect colleagues to develop leadership skills and experience through taking on a variety of leadership roles. Academic staff have open-ended contracts, while research staff are on fixed-term contracts related to projects in line with sector norms. Part-time working is welcome.

The Unit is committed to an inclusive research environment. We returned 100% of eligible staff on RTE contracts in 2014 (20.5FTE) and return 32.9FTE here, **an increase of 60%**. Of the current staff, 13FTE (40%) are new appointments. Given this **unprecedented growth and generational change,** recruiting the right people, while retaining and developing existing colleagues, has been crucial. Retention has been strong; of those submitted to REF2014, two retired and only three left, reflecting high staff satisfaction.

Since REF2014, the University's approach to recruiting excellent staff at all career stages, from postdoctoral and early career researchers (ECRs) through mid-career and senior roles, has radically changed. Following the University's 'Excellence100' campaign (from 2017), focussed unequivocally on excellence, recruitment to established posts is now conducted through biannual recruitment rounds, managed centrally but with significant School input, rather than piecemeal replacement hires. With excellence as the primary criterion, these rounds enhance strategic planning, deliver better international recruitment, and improve diversity.

Recruitment was strategically aligned with four research themes, while also promoting interdisciplinarity and impact. We sought a productive balance of proven expertise and leadership from senior/mid-career appointments and the dynamism afforded by talented ECRs. Early recruitment of a Professor and four Lecturers was complemented by recruitment under Excellence 100 of two Senior Lecturers, four Lecturers, a Vice-Chancellor's Research Fellow (5-

year postdoctoral fellowship leading to permanent appointment), and a Doctoral Prize Fellow (a two-year fellowship for ECRs within 2-years of PhD award).

We attend closely to **succession planning** for research-related leadership roles, through appointing staff to co-lead research groups or to participate in REF-related planning to gain relevant experience. Examples include Beller's co-leadership of the 'Cultural Currents 1870-1930' research group before being appointed as Doctoral Programme Lead for English; and Adiseshiah, selected as School REF Lead, and then appointed as Research Director for English.

2.2 Staff Development Strategy

Loughborough's **Organisational Development** offers a wide spectrum of training opportunities and support for Unit staff throughout their careers. Courses range from earliest stages (Welcome to Loughborough) through essential training (Information security training, Unconscious Bias) to training for staff becoming senior managers (Coaching conversations for managers, Recruitment and selection).

All academics are expected to obtain **Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy** (HEA). For new lecturers, this is integral to their dedicated development programme. More experienced colleagues are supported through our 'Recognition of Experienced Practitioners' scheme which requires preparation of a dossier of evidence to support their application.

Unit staff receive an **annual personal research allowance** of £750, and additional funds when in receipt of external funding. Additional internal funding can be applied for, with priority given to initiatives with ECR participation. A ring-fenced seedcorn fund (<£10k) is also available exclusively for ECRs.

Following the principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, the University provides structured support to **postdoctoral researchers** for career progression and development, including preparation of funding applications. This is increasingly important to the Unit; since 2014, we have hosted six postdoctoral researchers (none before 2014), including five funded by UKRI. All our postdoctoral researchers have mentors and benefit from Unit-level support. Evidence of effectiveness is found in their subsequent appointments at Sheffield and Queensland, as well as Liguori gaining her Lectureship at Loughborough.

Under the **New Lecturers' Programme (NLP)**, all new lecturers are guided by an experienced and trained academic colleague from the Unit who acts as Adviser. NLP (formerly academic probation) was substantially revised in 2017 and includes the full spectrum of research and impact activity (publication, funding applications, collaboration, public engagement, non-academic partnerships). New lecturers have a reduced workload in teaching and administration (33, 50, and 67% of departmental norms in consecutive years), which enables the establishment of a full academic profile in research, teaching, and impact at a manageable pace. In addition to an extensive training programme leading to FHEA, the New Lecturer meets four times annually with their Adviser. New Lecturers are allocated a university-funded PhD studentship within their first two years, for co-supervision with an experienced colleague. Supervision is a requirement to pass the programme, alongside a minimum expectation on research output production, and the submission of at least one substantial grant application. Almost a third of Unit staff have benefitted from NLP since 2014. 10 have competed the NLP and two have subsequently been promoted, evidencing the effectiveness of the programme.

Beyond NLP, our Unit established a successful **mentoring scheme** in 2015. Mentors (SLs, Readers and Professors) support mentees on publication strategy, collaborative practice, grant capture, and impact, and have fostered a measured approach to funding where applying for smaller grants precedes larger, more ambitious initiatives e.g., Jaillant's British Academy Rising Star Award led to her AHRC Leadership Fellowship and then two AHRC networking awards with the Irish Research Council (2020-21) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (2021-22);

Beller's Curran Fellowship informing a BA grant for her work on Victorian literature; and Liguori's AHRC IPS award leading to a Fellowship and collaboration with the Smithsonian. Mentoring was also instrumental in B.Cooke becoming the Textual Editing theme lead, O'Callaghan co-founding the Loughborough Community for Research in Mental Health Network, and Parker winning several externally funded library fellowships leading to outputs including *Michael Field: Decadent Moderns* (2019).

All members of post-probationary staff in the Unit have an **annual PDR**. A supportive one-to-one discussion between the reviewee and a trained reviewer reflects on achievements over the past year and agrees objectives across the full range of activities including CALIBRE-aligned goals for research and impact activity. The new PDR system, instigated in 2017, is a transparent way to recognise performance exceeding expectations with additional **financial reward** and allows much fairer identification of candidates for promotion. The scheme has particularly benefitted research staff for whom a rigorous developmental discussion was previously sporadic and consideration for reward a rarity.

The University has also revised the criteria for **academic promotion** (Senior Lecturer and Reader/Professor), to ensure that the research components align with the University Strategy and CALIBRE. Evidence for cases can be based on research, teaching, enterprise (impact) or any combination to encourage balanced portfolios of work. We judge 'Excellence and International Reputation' and 'Academic Leadership and Influence' rather than metrics that emphasise quantity over quality. This focus allows panels to take into account statements from promotion applicants describing how personal circumstances, such as caring responsibilities, may have affected their profile. The Unit has achieved 11 promotions: seven to SL (Beller, Bolton, J.Cooke, Hutton, Jaillant, Maiorani, Rees), three to Readership (Adiseshiah, Freeman, Hutton), and one to Professorship (Fry).

Unit staff can apply for **research and impact leave**, under University or School Fellowship schemes, which facilitate focus on exceptional activities for an extended period. Staff may apply for School Fellowships of up to six months, while University Fellowships can be up to 12 months for more ambitious projects, with funding for research costs. The Unit has been exceptionally successful, securing 18 six-month School and 11 12-month University Fellowships. This enabled the publication of most of our long-form outputs, including Hutton, *Serial Encounters: Ulysses and The Little Review* (OUP, 2019), Bolton, *Southey's Letters from England* (Routledge, 2016), and Brewer, *The Bible and Modern British Drama* (Routledge, 2019).

2.3 Research students

PGRs are highly valued and actively shape our research culture. We have achieved an upward trajectory of domestic and international PGR recruitment, with **44 doctorates awarded since 2014, a 69% increase** compared with REF2014**.**

The 2017 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) showed 81% of PGRs had attended or presented at conferences (national average 73%), and 38% (national average 36%) had submitted to an academic journal. Our PGRs have also undertaken editorial roles (e.g., international online journal *Literature Compass*). In 2019 PRES, PGRs gave 100% scores for 'supervisor's subject knowledge', 'regular contact with supervisor', and 'training in research skills'.

The Unit attracts **funding** to maintain its PGR population (c. 35 students) via university scholarships, external funding including UKRI, and high-quality self-funded students. The funding mix is approximately 40% internal funding, 10% external, and 50% self-funders. University scholarships include a core allocation, studentships matched to major awards (e.g., *Editing Aphra* Behn), and competitively awarded mini-Centres for Doctoral Training (mini-CDTs). The Unit partners in two Centres in 'Feminism, Sexual Politics, and Visual Culture' and 'Beyond the Binary', and a third addressing homelessness, 'Home'. The Storytelling Academy, secured

two further studentships through the AHRC-funded project 'What's Up with Everyone?' and a Glendonbrook Doctoral Fellowship was received via philanthropy.

PhD opportunities are posted on the School and FindAPhD websites. We arrange remote or in-person interviews of shortlisted candidates to ensure recruitment of high-quality students. Decisions are taken by two members of staff. The Doctoral College runs an **induction** event for new starters, complemented by School specific inductions. All students have two or more **supervisors** with whom they meet at least monthly. Minutes are recorded in the University's dedicated online Co-Tutor tool. The first year of PhD studies has an initial 6-month review, followed by annual reviews. All involve a report and viva with an independent examiner, through which student progression is decided.

The ADR provides **quality assurance** of research degree programmes within the School. Schools also have a Director of Doctoral Programmes who **monitors progression** and arranges subject specific training. A new PGR research studio was opened in 2016. Every PGR is guaranteed a desk and computer, an annual research allowance, and access to a subject specialist Careers Consultant. Further **specialist support** is available from the Mathematics Learning Support Centre, the English Language Support Unit, the Student Advice Centre, and the Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity Service. Schools have elected PGR representatives who are members of the PGR Sub-Committee.

The Doctoral College offers over 200 **skills development** events annually. All students are entitled to a minimum of one semester of teaching experience (with c.70% take-up), after completing the University's Teaching Skills course for PhD students. The Doctoral College runs the Annual Conference Summer Showcase Three Minute Thesis competition and the 'Diversity in Research' workshops. Funding to support travel and conferences is available through Santander Travel Awards and for international PGR exchanges. At School level, we organise an annual Doctoral Researcher Colloquium, where PGRs present to their peers and supervisors. PGRs also organise their own seminars, symposia, and conferences, as well as co-organising events with academic staff.

The **effectiveness** of Unit support is evident in awards and appointments post-PhD. Awards include 'Best Student Podium Presentation' at the 12th Annual Conference of The Society for the Study of Childhood in the Past, and funding from the British Association for Contemporary Literary Studies, Lüneburg Summer School for Digital Cultures, Association for the Study of Literature and Environment, and Alan Turing Institute. Appointments include Lectureships at UEA, De Montfort, and Leeds; a Readership at Manchester Metropolitan; and (internationally) lectureships at Savannah College of Art and Design (Georgia and Hong Kong), University of Queensland (Australia), and Manhattanville College (New York).

2.4 Equality and diversity

All colleagues complete courses in Respecting Diversity and Unconscious Bias. School SMTs receive bespoke Unconscious Bias training. The Unit supports the **Race Equality Charter** and **Stonewall Diversity Champion**. SSH and DCA both hold Bronze **Athena SWAN (AS) Awards**. AS annual monitoring includes PGR and staff application rates, uptake of staff training, promotion, seminar speakers, and awarding of internal fellowships, and funding. The Schools fund female staff to attend the Aurora Leadership Programme.

Issues of EDI, particularly in relation to race, gender, sexuality, disability, age, and social class, are central to much of our research, and EDI is centred in the Unit's culture. We are an international community of researchers of diverse backgrounds and ages. 63% of Unit staff, including 57% of Readers and Professors, identify as female (one of whom is of colour). 83% of those promoted were women which promises to improve the representation of women in senior positions during the next cycle. Female staff lead research groups and occupy a variety of research leadership posts including Research Director for English, Head of English, Doctoral

Programme Lead, and SSH Doctoral Research Culture Champion. These leaders include one colleague of colour and one who identifies as queer.

An SSH Decolonising the Curriculum Working Group (initiated by the Unit), with attention to research, feeds into the Unit's practice in policy-making and School committees. Schools have run events for Black History Month, International Women's Day, LGBT History month, and meetings on neurodiversity and accessibility, and racial inclusiveness. Engagement with EDI is now embedded in PDR.

Formal **flexible working** requests are approved by HR with support from the School. 22% of staff (8F/1M), including one Professor, have flexible working arrangements, ranging from compressed hours to specific working days/hours and fractional contracts. Our staffing policy ensures part-time staff have equal access to career pathways, evidenced by notable research successes – Hobby's *Editing Aphra Behn* project, and Bolton's and Hutton's publications of a double-weighted monograph and scholarly edition contributing to promotions (twice for Hutton). Academic staff also have the option to work flexibly or remotely on an informal basis so long as their responsibilities are fulfilled. For circumstances such as caring for a family member in poor health, staff can request compassionate leave for immediate issues or longer term flexible working for ongoing responsibilities. **Remote working** is facilitated via the VPN (with secure multifactor authentication) that provides access to all University online resources. These policies have eased the transition to effective home working during the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020.

Staff and Research Students returning from periods of leave are supported in their transition by their School. Staff returning from parental leave benefit from a course release in the first year to enable them to re-establish their research agendas, as well as flexible timetabling to facilitate caring responsibilities. For example, Hutton returned from maternity leave and moved to part-time in 2014, and then gradually back to full-time. Occupational Health and Head of Unit supported Rees in moving to part-time on her return from leave. She has subsequently published a monograph, and been promoted to SL.

Support for Staff with Protected Characteristics: annual equality audits are conducted to ensure support is provided to all colleagues, including those with protected characteristics. EDI committees collect information about grant success rates and studentship applications by gender, and seek support from both School and university research committees to promote a culture of equality and diversity in the research resource distribution. Workloads and timetabling are adjusted to support cognitive diversity, for example. Promotion and PDR criteria acknowledge that caring responsibilities, ill-health, and disability may limit activity e.g., international travel, and we proactively tackle inequalities (e.g., CALIBRE's 'Here to Stay' programme invites international researchers to campus so colleagues can network internationally without travel). Staff with caring responsibilities can receive caring costs of up to £200/year.

Support for the wellbeing of staff and research students has been strengthened with four new School-level roles: Director of Academic Staffing, Wellbeing Advisor, dedicated HR partner, and Doctoral Research Culture Champion. Our Unit has its own mental health first aider and a central offer of services including Counselling, Occupational Health, and an Employee Assistance Programme, providing 24-hour telephone counselling, with repeated sessions for staff with complex issues.

2.5 EDI in our REF submission

Following the University's REF Code of Practice, the Unit created a REF Leadership Group of four staff (2F/2M including 1 BAME) and a Reviewers Group (5F/3M), all of whom undertook REF-specific EDI training. Four external advisors (1F/3M) supported the Unit. Output and ICS selections were based solely on excellence. Throughout our REF preparations, equality impact

assessments (EIA) were carried out to assess institutional processes and our draft return, including outputs selected against protected characteristics, and to determine whether further action was required. EIAs confirmed no issues required attention. 71% of outputs selected are attributed to staff identifying as female (63% of staff identify as female).
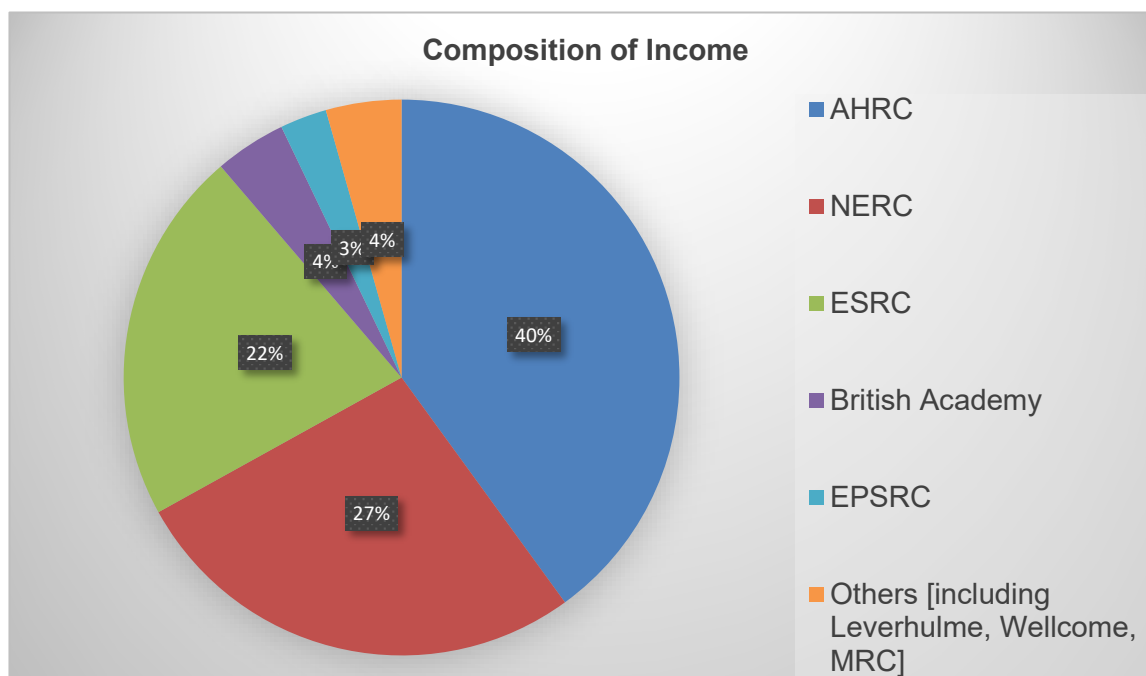
3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

3.1 Research Funding and Strategies

Research funding has been critical to fulfilling our REF2014 research plan to extend the significance and reach of our research, with particular emphasis on collaborative projects, international partnerships, and interdisciplinary research. The individual strategic aims of placing a sharper focus on strengths, prioritising quality over quantity in grant applications and collaborative projects, and encouraging all staff to be outward looking, internationally engaged researchers have all contributed to delivering a significant increase in research funding. This has been especially important for growing capacity in our new areas of influence, Applied Storytelling and Digital Humanities.

In operational detail, we strengthened quality assurance processes for bids including: demand management of strategically important calls; early and ongoing peer review of applications; mock-interview panels; and close engagement with the Research and Enterprise Office (REO) from inception to bid completion. We implemented additional support for pilot research, networking, and partnership development through competitive internal funding. The result was:

- **1000% increase in research income** to £1.99M (£182k in REF2014).
- a greater number of substantial grant winners: only three staff won grants of >£10k in REF2014; for REF2021 it is seven (three of whom are ECRs).
- a diversification of funders (including for the first time NERC, ESRC, EPSRC, and MRC).

Composition of Income

- AHRC — 40%
- NERC — 27%
- ESRC — 22%
- British Academy — 4%
- EPSRC — 3%
- Others [including Leverhulme, Wellcome, MRC] — 4%

While the largest single proportion is from the AHRC, 60% is from other sources, with 49% awarded from NERC and ESRC, which evidences **diversification** and **interdisciplinarity**. Staff have also gained funding for internationalisation from the Newton Fund and GCRF. We focused on winning larger grants, using smaller awards to prepare for larger bids (for example, Hobby's USA Library fellowships in 2014-15, providing the foundation for *Editing Aphra Behn* in 2016).

Strengthening our key areas of influence, particularly Textual Editing, Applied Storytelling, and Digital Humanities facilitated participation in **research consortia**. Awards in Textual Editing evidence our agenda-setting ambitions. *Editing Aphra Behn* (AHRC, £752k; Hobby, 2016-21) is a **major collaborative project** with Birmingham, Leicester and Sheffield Universities to produce a complete edition of Behn's work through collation of manuscript and life-time printed sources in archives worldwide. *The Complete Works of Evelyn Waugh* (AHRC, £822k [£18k to this Unit]; CI: B.Cooke, 2013-19) is producing for OUP a 43-volume edition of Waugh's fiction, travel-writing, juvenilia, letters, and essays. This is a collaboration with Leicester University and partners including the Harry Ransom Center and British Library.

We achieved multiple successes in Applied Storytelling – 25 grants totalling £1.1M – the most **prestigious awards** (Wilson PI) being *Developing a Drought Narrative Resource in a Multi-Stakeholder Decision-making Utility* (NERC, £388k; 2014) and *Loneliness in the Digital Age (LIDA): Developing Strategies for Empathy and Trust* (ESRC, £235k; 2014-18). We also secured (Wilson CI) Newton Funding for Applied Storytelling work on biodiversity in Colombia, *How Does the Paramo Capture and Store Water? The Role of Plants and People* (NERC, £147k [£43k in this census period]; 2018-21); *PARAMO – Provisioning of Ecosystem Services and Cultural Values in the Montane Tropics* (NERC, £234k [£108k in this census period]; 2018-21), and several GCRF projects in Eastern Africa and India. These grants exemplify our participation in **large research consortia,** and our **international reach**.

Digital Humanities achieved significant income across the census period (£288k), with **collaborative awards** enabled by strategic planning supported by mentoring (Jaillant), and investment in pilot research for Beals. Beals' *Oceanic Exchanges* was supported by £3000 seedcorn funding to work with Gale Cengage and the British Library. A further £84k EPG grant enabled outreach on the *Atlas of Digitised Newspapers* (2019-21), a comprehensive guide published in 2020 to the histories, structures, and metadata of ten collections of digitised newspapers. Fry was the Unit's lead on *Open-Access Mega-Journals and the Future of Scholarly Communication* (AHRC, £420k [£57k to this Unit]; 2015-17), a large **interdisciplinary collaboration** with Sheffield.

Funded projects have led to numerous **high quality outputs** including in this submission one volume from *Editing Aphra Behn* and two monographs supported by *The Complete Works of Evelyn Waugh*. Funding has also **enhanced impact activity;** ICS1 and ICS2 relate to *Developing a Drought Narrative Resource in a Multi-Stakeholder Decision-making Utility* (NERC) and *Storying the Cultural Heritage* (AHRC) respectively.

3.2 Organisational Infrastructure supporting Research and Impact

Unit staff receive support in the Schools and from the REO. A dedicated **Research Development Manager** (RDM) identifies funding opportunities, fosters close relationships with funders, supports interdisciplinary collaborations, and develops bids. Working closely with RDMs has increased the quantity and quality of our funding applications. This is particularly true for ECRs (for example, Jaillant, Beals, and B.Cooke) and for larger multi-partner and interdisciplinary projects, where RDMs broker networking across and beyond the University. A dedicated **Partnership Development Manager** (PDM) helps us to build knowledge exchange partnerships, generate impact, and apply for funding through the EPG (£100k secured for five impact projects).

CALIBRE's **Institute of Advanced Studies** (IAS, since 2017) offers competitive funding for visiting fellowships and supports internationalisation. In 2019-20, the IAS 'water' theme brought Visiting Fellows from Turkey, USA, Denmark, Japan, and South Africa, and Murray led an interdisciplinary event, 'The Linearization of Landscapes: Patterns of Water, Terrain, and Life'. Under IAS (2020), the Storytelling Academy hosted a **Leadership summit**, convening leading international thinkers to set a future research agenda for Applied Storytelling. As global leaders, we attracted an invited audience of 100 participants from five continents.

3.3 Operational and Scholarly Infrastructure Supporting Research and Impact

All researchers have access to advanced technical facilities, including a sound recording studio. The Applied Storytelling team use editing suites and MacLabs to produce digital stories, and share the Applied Storytelling Studio, which is equipped with video conferencing facilities to enable international collaboration. Staff additionally benefit from three Drama studios (including one fully equipped licensed theatre), which support practice-as-research.

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

4.1 Support for research collaborations, networks and partnerships

Encouraging Unit staff to be outward-looking internationally engaged researchers was explicit in our Research and Impact Strategy (section 1.2) and research collaborations, networks and partnerships are instrumental to achieving this. CALIBRE's Beacons, Global Challenges, and IAS, the dedicated RDM and PDM, and internal funding for pilot research activities all support network-building nationally and internationally. The effectiveness of this support is evidenced in the 1000% increase in externally funded projects with both UK and international partners, often involving interdisciplinary teams.

Nationally, **collaborative projects with academic partners** demonstrate the utility of interdisciplinary encounters between English and fields like computer science for our research in Textual Editing and Digital Humanities. In addition to strong partnerships developed with colleagues from Birmingham on *Editing Aphra Behn* and Leicester and Oxford on the *Complete Works of Evelyn Waugh*, we have formed an ongoing partnership with Sheffield's School of Business and Economics through Open-Access Mega Journals, which identified the defining characteristics of the emergent open-access 'mega-journal' phenomenon and its significance across academic disciplines; and with Keele and Lincoln through the landmark, interdisciplinary conference, *Narratives of Old Age and Gender* (British Academy, 2019).

Strategic investment in **international partnerships** has resulted in new MoUs with UCLA, RMIT (Melbourne), and the Universities of Malta, Odessa, and Leipzig, and has enabled our participation in multiple international research projects:

- Applied Storytelling researchers forged international collaborations, including a key partnership with the **Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)**, a Swedish organisation of environmental and social scientists with presence in the UK, Nairobi, Bangkok, and Bogota. The partnership was facilitated through the Climate Adaptation and Water Governance project between Europe, Australia, and Canada in 2014. This led to the AHRC-funded *The Reasons*, and to projects in Kenya with UN-Live (ICS1). This partnership facilitated much of our GCRF work and resulted in invitations to join projects with SEI Africa (Nairobi).
- We worked with partners across Europe (for example, Pädagogische Hochschule Freiburg and University of Roma Tre) in relation to storytelling in education, heritage, and citizenship, enabled by €600k for eight EU projects funded by the **Erasmus+ programme**.
- Digital Humanities developed partnerships and networks focused on digital cultural heritage. Jaillant's projects on born-digital archives have led to new initiatives as UK PI on AURA (AHRC/IRC) and AEOLIAN (AHRC/NEH), focusing on Artificial Intelligence applied to archival collections and underpinned by a key partnership with computer scientists in the ADAPT centre at **Dublin City University**. Maiorani's CALIBRE-funded *The Potential for Kinesemiotics* project (2017) has led to the much larger *The Kinesemiotic Body* (2021-2023), an AHRC-funded collaboration with **University of Bremen** and distinguished linguist, Professor John Bateman (Bremen).

Our international networking led to visits from 10 world-leading academics, including Professors Jack Zipes (Minnesota) who delivered public lectures and ran masterclasses for our postgraduates, Margaret Stetz (Delaware) who has mentored our Victorian ECRs, and E. Ann

Kaplan (Stony Brook) who is collaborating on a special issue on ageing of the *Journal of the British Academy*.

4.1.1 Key research Users, Beneficiaries or Audiences to Develop Impact
Our objective to raise the profile of impact of our research encourages staff to collaborate with arts organisations, libraries, media outlets, charities, NGOs, policy makers, and the health and environment sectors in the UK and across the world. Through the growing international profile of arts and humanities at Loughborough, we have new MoUs with the Smithsonian Institution, the English National Ballet, and the Yard and Almeida Theatres.

Examples from Applied Storytelling include Public Health England (presentations to PHE staff); the Great Fen Project (workshops for staff and volunteers); the Smithsonian (knowledge exchange events); and UN Live and Atlas Foundation (series of meetings with senior managers). The Unit has, furthermore, increased the geographical range of its collaborations to include Colombia (Humboldt Institute in Bogota), USA (Queen's Company, Folger Shakespeare Library), India (Mental Health Action Trust in Calicut), Australia (National Library of Australia), and Kenya (UN-Live in Nairobi). Non-HEI partners such as Hope Raisers, an NGO in Nairobi, are both beneficiaries and also co-producers of research, and named as such in funding applications.

Selected examples beyond our ICSs include:
- Our partnership with the **John Rylands Library** (JRL) is based on Jaillant's BA Rising Star (2017-18) and AHRC Leadership Fellowship (2018-20), resulting in (1) the preservation and curation of oral history interviews and born-digital archives of leading poetry publisher, Carcanet Press; (2) increased public access to these archives through an exhibition and open access digital resource; and (3) the development, through international workshops and publications, of the JRL's world-leading profile in the management of born-digital records.
- Maiorani's *Kinesemiotics* project, which employs innovative methods for capturing both movement and discourse in the archiving of choreographies. It partners with the **English National Ballet** (ENB), who see the benefit in new teaching techniques and rehearsal practices with particular importance for new choreographers.
- Our collaboration with the **Bradgate Park Trust**, whose mission is to maintain the park for the benefit of Leicestershire's residents and visitors, and advance public appreciation of the environment. Featherstone was invited to be their first poet-in-residence (2018-20). He drew on his landscape research to facilitate workshops, write poetry, and produce a blog.
- Warden received three Arts Council awards (totalling £50k) to support performance wrestling projects. In 2017, she co-founded a practice-led arts collective, **Wrestling Resurgence***,* to recognise wrestling as an art form.

4.1.2 Wider contributions to Society
Our wider contributions to society, particularly cultural enrichment, are also evident in outputs aimed at non-academic audiences and numerous invitations to speak at events aimed at non-academic audiences. Selected examples include:

- Tearle's *Interesting Literature: A Library of Literary Interestingness* (established 2012) has received 44.4 million views, over 25,619 subscribers, global reach (16.9 million views from USA, 5.2 million from India, 1.7 million from Canada, 1.6 million from Australia), and citation on the *QI* website as a key source for their best-selling books of facts. This led to Tearle's invitation to contribute to the books blog of the *Huffington Post* (2013-17), and Tearle's publication of two popular books: *The Secret Library* (Michael O'Mara, 2016) and *Britain by the Book* (John Murray, 2017) with tie-in talks at the Nottingham Readers Day (2016) and the Stratford Literary Festival (2018).
- Scott-Jeffs' well reviewed play *Letters to Emma* (2017) (included in our outputs) was produced in the Lichfield Garrick Studio for five performances, selling out for three, to over 650 audience members.

- Read's debut novel, ***The Gossips' Choice*** (Wildpressed Books, 2020) about a midwife in 1665, has a cover endorsement from Terri Coates, Clinical Editor of BBC's *Call the Midwife.* The novel has attracted a wide healthcare readership after being positively reviewed in *Midwifery Matters Magazine*. Read has given talks about the novel at local museums, Association of Radical Midwives Annual Conference, and Wolverhampton Literary Festival, and has been interviewed on BBC Radio Leicester. The publisher commissioned a sequel (2022).

Unit staff have roles as **executive members of advisory and consultancy bodies** including: Hackney Wick Arts Collective, the London Legacy Corporation, the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society, performance poetry organisation Apples and Snakes, the Theatre Boards of the Curve (Leicester), the Northampton Repertory Company, and the Lichfield Garrick Theatre.

4.1.3 How the unit engages diverse communities and publics through its research
Our research reaches a wide range of users, beneficiaries, and audiences through a **programme of public engagement**, including appearances on BBC national and local radio (Maiorani, Read, Warden), at the National Theatre (Adiseshiah, Wilson), at festivals (B. Cooke, Featherstone, O'Byrne), and through public lectures (Freeman, Hobby, Wood). Unit staff organised three **'Being Human'** events (the most recent being 'Wikithon: Old and New Loughborough, 2020'), and contributed five pieces to *The Conversation* (for example, Fitzpatrick's 'Charles Dickens and the birth of the classic English Christmas Dinner', 2018 and Parker's 'Poets and Lovers: the two women who were Michael Field', 2020).

Further examples include:

- Applied Storytelling projects which co-produce research with diverse communities in low-to-middle income countries, such as Wilson's *Creative Methodologies to Investigate Sustainable Transport* and *Action for Interdisciplinary Air Pollution Research* projects (both based in Kenya).
- Adiseshiah's collaboration with partners from the Universities of Keele and Lincoln, **Age UK,** and the **National Pensioners Convention** informed the *Narratives of Old Age and Gender* conference, an ongoing collaboration that engages communities of older people as stakeholders in the research. Adiseshiah won a British Academy conferences award for *Narratives of Old Age and Gender* (2019), leading to a Supplementary Issue of the *Journal of the British Academy* (2022). The BA funded 17 world-leading, interdisciplinary speakers, hosting the meeting at its London premises.
- Warden's ***Wrestling Resurgence*** substantially changed the demographic of visitors to three East Midlands art centres; 80% of audience members at Attenborough Arts Centre, *Resurgence's* home venue, had never been inside the arts centre before. *Resurgence* hosted the first all-person-of-colour wrestling show (2019) to celebrate Black History Month.

4.2 Contribution to the sustainability of the discipline

Our most influential contributions are linked to our establishment and leadership of key professional organisations, and our convening of international audiences to debate major intellectual challenges.

Adiseshiah (with colleagues from Royal Holloway, Birkbeck, Birmingham, and Salford) **co-founded** the British Association for Contemporary Literary Studies (BACLS) in 2016-17 (J.Cooke was its **Treasurer** until 2020). Van Mierlo is **President** of the European Society for Textual Scholarship (2016-) and was **Trustee** of the International James Joyce Foundation (2012-18). Jaillant is on the **Advisory Council,** Institute of English Studies (2017-), an **IES Champion** (from 2020), and was **Treasurer** of the British Association for Modernist Studies (BAMS) (2017-19). Collins was **Co-Convenor** of History UK (2014-17).

Our commitments extend across career ranks, evident in the **involvement of ECRs** in leading sections of major associations: Parker was **Postdoctoral Officer** for the British Association of Victorian Studies until 2015 and is now **Careers Officer**; O'Callaghan is **Conference Officer** for the Contemporary Women's Writing Association (2020-); 12 Unit staff are **executive committee members** of University English, the English Association, BAMS (Warden is Chair, 2021-), Royal Historical Society, Theatre and Performance Research Association, Women's Studies Group 1558-1837, Victorian Popular Fiction Association, and European Network for Drama in Translation.

We steer the development of our discipline through **organising major national and international conferences**, bolstering the external visibility of our research while **responding to national and international priorities**. Since 2014, the Unit has hosted over 30 international conferences, symposia, and workshops, including J.Cooke's organisation of the inaugural BACLS 'What Happens Now' conference (2018); Beller, Freeman, and Parker's two-day *George Egerton and the Fin de Siècle* conference (2017) resulting in a forthcoming volume; Dix's international, interdisciplinary *Violence and the American Imagination* conference (2015) leading to *Violence from Slavery to #BlackLivesMatter* (Routledge, 2020) included among our outputs; and the *Applied Storytelling Leadership Summit* (2020) resulting in a *Story Work for a Just Future* (Smithsonian Press, 2022).

In interdisciplinary research, the Unit is developing expertise in **Health Humanities**, with intersections of animal science and the humanities (Murray), dietary science and literary criticism (Fitzpatrick), physiology and life writing (Read), and dance and semiotics (Maiorani). Unit members founded the Loughborough Network for Mental Health Research.

4.3 Indicators of Wider Influence

Since 2014, the Unit has built a vibrant, sustainable, and influential research culture shaped by staff at all career stages, from Hobby's Aphra Behn project to Parker's *Women Poets and Photography, 1860-1970* online exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery and O'Callaghan's work on the Brontës, which featured in the Channel 4 documentary, *The Secret World of Emily Brontë* (2018).

We have increased our **engagement with funders**, especially UKRI Research Councils. Seven colleagues were appointed as Peer Reviewers for the AHRC (Adiseshiah, J.Cooke, Fitzpatrick, Hobby, Jaillant, Wilson, Wood). Wilson chaired several AHRC funding panels and served on the AHRC GCRF Peer Review College, the AHRC Strategic Reviewers' Group, and the AHRC Advisory Boards for the Connected Communities and Digital Transformations Programmes. Wilson also chaired the Arts and Humanities Panel for the British Council's Newton Fund Researcher Links Scheme since 2014, where he revised the rubric to make it more accessible to arts and humanities researchers.

Unit staff have contributed to the **editorial boards** of over 30 international journals and book series (e.g., *CounterText, The Eighteenth Century, Journal of Gender Studies*, and *New Theatre Quarterly*) and have strengthened the discipline by playing **leading editorial roles:**

- J.Cooke is **Associate Editor** for *Contemporary Women's Writing,* where she has proactively prioritised support for ECRs and researchers from the global south.
- As **Editor-in-chief** of *Variants: the Journal of the European Society for Textual Scholarship* (2012-19), Van Mierlo nurtured this international and interdisciplinary forum for the theory and practice of textual scholarship in Europe and beyond, promoting digital editing.
- Beller was **General Editor** of the *Wilkie Collins Journal* (2012-16), where she widened the journal's remit from focusing on Collins' major works to encompassing the more neglected areas of his oeuvre.

- Jarvis was **Commissioning Editor** for 'American Literature' and 'Modernist Geographies' in *Literature Compass* (2012-20), where he prioritised work by ECRs and the reframing of debates.
- Beals is **History Editor** for the *Open Library of Humanities* where she inaugurated the policy of appointing ECR and senior peer reviewers for each submission to ensure a long-term community of reviewers and respect for both established and new perspectives.

Our staff delivered over **60 keynote lectures and plenary talks in countries across the world**, including at the Universities of Cambridge, Oxford, London, Pisa, Paderborn, Chieti-Pescara, Malta, UCLA, Texas, Pennsylvania, Ohio State, South Dakota State, Monash University's Prato Centre, RMIT (Melbourne), and Paris 8 (Nanterre). Specific examples include Fitzpatrick's 'ExpoShakespeare: Food Onstage' (Milan State University, 2014), Van Mierlo's 'Beyond the Text: A Critical Eco-System for Literary Manuscripts' (University of Banja Luka, Bosnia Herzegovina, 2015), Parker's 'Who's Afraid of Alice Meynell' (University of Birmingham 2018), and Wood's 'A Jacobite Alexander Pope? (Yale, 2017).

Unit members received **Visiting Professorships** at the Universities of Texas (Hobby) and Antwerp (Van Mierlo), UCLA (Wood), and Trinity College, Dublin (Hutton). In addition, we secured over 20 **prestigious fellowships** enabling colleagues to access archives internationally, resulting in major new outputs. For example:

- Beller received a **Curran Fellowship** by the Research Society for Victorian Periodicals (2015) which led to *Geraldine Jewsbury: Critical Essays and Reviews* (EUP, forthcoming).
- J.Cooke was a **Visiting Scholar at Oxford University's Centre for Life-Writing** (2015-6), which informed her monograph, *Contemporary Feminist Life Writing* (CUP, 2020)*.*
- In 2018, ECR Liguori was the **Smithsonian Fellow** at the Smithsonian Center for Learning and Digital Access, which resulted in a MoU to explore the use of digital storytelling as a teaching strategy within the Smithsonian Learning Lab.
- Hutton was one of three colleagues (with Hobby and Wood) to gain a **Harry Ransom Fellowship** (2019) which enabled her forthcoming curation of a physical and online exhibition, *Women and the Making of Ulysses* (Ransom Center, 2022).
- Wood was a **Williams Andrew Clark Memorial Library Fellow** (2016), which informed his monograph, *Shakespeare and Reception Theory* (Bloomsbury, 2020), as was Freeman, whose fellowship informed REF output 'Paths and Percolations'. (Hobby and Parker were also Clark Fellows).
- Hobby was awarded nine fellowships at libraries in the USA (including **Katharine F. Pantzer Jr Fellowship in Descriptive Bibliography**, Houghton Library, **Harvard**, 2015) and Australia (e.g. **National Library of Australia**, 2019), which contributed to the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Aphra Behn*. Hobby's findings were disseminated at international conferences including at Yale University, the Shakespeare Association of America, and the British Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies.

Taken together, our influence through engagement with funders, as editors, keynote speakers, and fellowship holders is shaping future directions in our field.