Unit-level environment template (REF5b)

Institution: Bath Spa University

Unit of assessment: 34: Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management

Section 1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy

Context and structure

At Bath Spa University the disciplines of Communication, Cultural and Media Studies play a hugely significant role in enabling industries and communities to rethink the media as a force for social change. The Centre for Media Research, itself this unit's structural mechanism for enabling our research and impact strategy, instils precisely this philosophy in its approach to research excellence and innovation. Based in the School of Creative Industries and comprising staff from its subject areas of Film, Media and Creative Computing, the Centre puts film, media and computing at the heart of social, community and environmental dynamics that affect daily life. Its core membership of 17 staff brings together media artists and researchers, filmmakers, game and app developers, and well as researchers from Sociology, Theatre and Heritage.

Structurally, research strategy in the unit is led by Freeman as UoA Leader, with Tweed and Freeman as Co-Directors of the Centre for Media Research. Farrar and Levy act as Public Engagement Champions for the unit, with Steele leading on work-in-progress initiatives.

Research strategy

The unit's research strategy until 2030 focuses around the development of excellence and innovation in **socially-engaged media research**. We aim to creatively rethink what film, media and computing can achieve in diverse communities, driving forward innovative approaches to collaboration across theory and practice, public engagement, and community/industry impact.

Since 2014, we have evolved our previous areas of research strength – cultural experience, creative practice, and social contexts – into three new areas of strategic interdisciplinary focus: **Digital Ecologies**, **Film & Social Context**, and **Play & Multiplatform**. These three themes have been transformed into active, operational research clusters within the Centre for Media Research, structuring the research activity of our established and early career researchers.

The Digital Ecologies cluster, led by Tweed, comprises the experimental work of 4 staff (Clark, Manton, Tweed, Wilkins), and develops practice-based research interrogating the environmental and social conditions of contemporary digital culture. The cluster explores the connection between the physical and the virtual using experimental arts practices and creative technologies (see **Impact Case Study UoA34-1 NET**). The Film & Social Context cluster, led by Farrar, brings together the work of 7 staff (Brown, Cresswell, Farrar, Feasey, Levy, Steele, Turner), and aims to creatively examine contemporary transnational questions of gender, community and culture. Seeking to unearth the sorts of representations that go beyond the reach of the mass media, such as research into small national cinemas and diversity across the global film industry, researchers in this cluster also explore the shifting relationships between such representations and the art of filmmaking, translating social content via documentary and environmental film practice. The Play & Multiplatform cluster, led by Freeman, brings together 6 staff (Curry, Freeman, Hobbs, Newman, Scott, White), and concentrates on innovative, community-targeted multiplatform and game-centric media strategies. This cluster explores the creative and technological opportunities arising from participatory and playable convergences between multiplatform storytelling and gameplay interfaces, between social media channels, story apps and mobile media, for example in multi-media histories (see **Impact Case Study 2 UoA34-2 MMH**).

Supporting interdisciplinarity

Our approach to supporting interdisciplinary research is shaped by our established areas of excellence in videogames, gender and representation, metal studies and transmedia studies, and our emerging areas of creative practice innovation, such as experimental media arts. In

effect, our unique approach to facilitating interdisciplinarity across theory and practice enables colleagues to do the kind of creative research that they would not be able to do otherwise.

For example, emerging out of the Film & Social Context research cluster was the Infertility, the Media and Me project (2018-19). Here, Levy and Farrar responded to Feasey's monograph dealing with representations of (in)fertility in the media (2019) by exploring how participatory documentary methods can reveal new ways of engaging with this social issue. Producing a short film and participant-led video diaries that screened at Fertility Fest 2018, the research evidenced a change in perception for how (in)fertility is represented in the media. Based on this work, Scott has partnered with MyFertilityMatters, a social enterprise devoted to raising awareness for infertility. This will augment the work of Feasey, Levy and Farrar even further, in this case by developing an app-based game for child audiences that aims to improve fertility education. The entire project was captured in a curated special issue of In Media Res in 2020.

Interdisciplinarity is further enabled via the Centre for Media Research's structured working relationships with the University-wide Strategic Research Centres, including the Centre for Environmental Humanities. Tweed is on this Centre's steering group, allowing him to facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration between researchers interested in media-engaged environmental humanities. The activity is structured through the biennial Digital Ecologies symposia series, co-hosted by the Centre for Media Research and the Centre for Environmental Humanities. The Digital Ecologies symposia series exemplifies our cutting-edge interdisciplinary approach to exploring relationships between contemporary digital technologies and human life, bringing together researchers from across the fields of digital media, environment humanities, and art and design practice to explore the role of creative practice in critiquing today's digital cultures.

For example, Tweed's research combines approaches from the field of art to explore ideas of post-humanism, integrating reflexive references to populist genre cinema, experimental essay film, and ecology theory, which altogether lead to new insights for the field of digital ecologies. Similarly, Feasey's research combines gender studies from media communications with scientific medical literature to develop new understandings of the role of media in wider social dynamics. Elsewhere, White has developed a social media-led walking-arts practice – bringing digital media and heritage together as a new form of social justice intervention, developing participatory tools for enhancing resonance with local heritage (see **ICS UoA34-2 MMH**).

Impact strategy

Our approach to impact stems from our core approach to excellence and innovation in socially engaged media research, and equally from the Centre's aforementioned research production process, which embeds impact from the beginning before bringing together a mix of scholarly and practice-based researchers as collaborative partners in the UK's creative community.

As with the unit's research, our impact strategy is thus geared towards **creatively-motivated, technology-based and community-centred** activity. Clark, for example, uses her immersive theatre company, Raucous, as a hub for pioneering new kinds of technology based impact. A recipient of Arts Council England awards worth GBP227,000 and GBP197,000 respectively, Clark's The Stick House (2015) and Ice Road (2017) productions made use of a network of creative technologists and theatre makers, pushing forward immersive theatre practices by asking how digital technology can be embedded in performance delivery (see **ICS UoA34-1 NET**).

Meanwhile, the creatively motivated and community centred nature of our impact strategy has been key to developing new media practices of direct benefit to community stakeholders. The research of Freeman and Newman has led to new participatory education sites, the former for teaching the Colombian armed conflict, the latter the UK game sector. Specifically, Freeman's research has developed new understandings for how transmedia storytelling can communicate history across media, utilised by 22 teachers and reaching circa 600 students in Colombia (see **ICS UoA34-2 MMH**). Newman has developed models for the preservation and exhibition of videogames, co-authoring White Papers that share current best practice with the UK museum and game development sectors on preserving videogames as cultural heritage (2018, 2020).

As was also promised in our REF2014 Environment Statement, we have strengthened the impact of our research through strategic partnerships with the creative industries. This has been achieved partly through Freeman's role as Deputy Director of the University-wide Centre for Cultural and Creative Industries (CCCI), where he was Co-Investigator on the AHRC Bristol+Bath Creative R+D Partnership (2018-2020), a GBP6.8 million collaboration between all four Bath and Bristol universities that connects university research and creative businesses to develop the future of the south west's creative industries (see Institutional Level Environment Statement IES 4.1.2). Freeman's role involved supporting colleagues across the university whose interests align with the creative industries, for example by developing funded fellowships.

Beyond Centre for Media Research structures, impact is further considered when planning research at an institutional level. It is prioritised in the university's core strategy for research, which specifically promotes engaged research with impact. Staff are supported in developing impact plans when bidding for external research funds through the Research Support Office, which reviews draft proposals against impact requirements of specific funders. The university's Impact Research Fellow supports staff in planning impact (IES 2.4), such as in gathering evaluation and evidence for Impact Case Studies. The unit's UoA Leader also supports impact by identifying beneficiaries for external funding bids.

Open research and integrity

The unit's strategy for open research is guided by the institutional strategy, policies and processes that are described in the REF5a Institutional Environment Statement. The university's REF Code of Practice gives the UoA Leader responsibility for ensuring that colleagues 'keep their details on ResearchSPAce [institutional open access repository] up to date'. Visibility of the unit's outputs allows the Library repository team to gather full text or datasets, as appropriate, for open publication. The UoA Leader is able to monitor open research compliance by metrics provided through the university's annual Quality Review.

The unit closely collaborates with the Library repository team. SRR staff are offered annual refreshers to maintain understanding of open research requirements and there are open access progress reports at the bi-monthly UoA Leaders' meetings. The unit's online staff profiles are automatically populated with publication data from the open access repository, incentivising academic engagement. The Library team monitor the open access status of the unit's outputs, requesting full text content where publisher policies allow. The BathSPAdata repository is available to host accompanying research data from the unit's outputs, including all e-portfolios, in keeping with the UK Concordat on Open Research Data.

Within the university's institutional strategy there is scope for the unit to develop its own approach to open research, going beyond the minimum requirements of REF2021. For this unit, the research team has taken practical steps in support of 'Plan S', anticipating the next phase of open research by pushing forward the accessibility and public availability of creative media research. The unit's International Journal of Creative Media Research was conceived from the start as an online, fully open access title, with no APC charges and a default Creative Commons BY-NC-ND licence. IJCMR is registered in the Directory of Open Access Journals, an online directory that indexes and provides access to open access, peer-reviewed journals, and the Open Access in Media Studies database, which aims to promote open access publishing in the field of media studies. The Library supports the Open Library of Humanities, a publishing model intended to drive the transition to full and immediate open access for scholarly journal titles ('Plan S'). This includes popular titles such as Open Screens journal.

The unit supports the principle that monographs developed with public funds should be made publicly available. Within resource limitations, the unit is taking practical steps to realise this principle by supporting new funding models for open access monographs and by increasing the number of book chapters made openly available by the unit's authors (utilising 'green' open access publisher policies). Examples of whole monographs made openly available include Feasey's Mothers on Mothers: Maternal Readings of Popular Television (2016) and Brown's Global Metal Music and Cultures: Current Directions in Metal Studies (2016). The Library has

pledged funds to the Knowledge Unlatched project, a consortia initiative to 'unlock' books for open access publication, including a diverse collection of Media and Communication titles.

The unit supports a culture of research integrity through a formal research ethics process, reporting to the University Ethics Panel. At School level, research ethics is led by Newman, who supports colleagues in developing ethical projects, and reviews ethics applications that consider responsibilities to: participants and stakeholders in research, the community of educational researchers, publication and dissemination, and the wellbeing of researchers.

Future research strategy

Building on our accomplishments in developing an innovative, socially engaged research culture built on collaboration across theory and practice, public engagement and related industry/community impact, our strategic objectives for the next five years are as follows:

1. Be at the forefront at creative media research internationally

Our International Journal of Creative Media Research already has an international readership from 12 countries, but we will continue to develop the unit's capacity to lead researchers everywhere in new approaches to creative media research. We will do this in part by launching the **Multi-Media Methods Café**, a planned collaboration between Bath Spa University and Cardiff University that will form a network of researchers. Led by Levy, the Café emerges most out of the unit's approach to creatively motivated, technology based and community targeted media research, but more specifically out of our distinctive use of video, audio, photography, drawing and walking as creative media research methodologies (see **ICS UoA34-2 MMH**).

Our aim to be at the forefront of creative media research internationally will also be achieved by establishing an **Award in Creative Media Research**, which will act as an off-line extension for our International Journal of Creative Media Research. The award, open to researchers from around the world, will provide academics with a peer-reviewed opportunity to produce creative media research for the MediaWall, an architectural scale portrait gallery consisting of thirty 55" screens across a canvas 7.5m high and 4m wide. The MediaWall, occupying the triple height atrium space of Commons building at Newton Park campus, offers a framework for colleagues to explore how their practice could develop when reconceived for this unique platform.

Linked to our strategic focus on leading the field of creative media research, we will build the **Conference of the International Journal of Creative Media Research** into a flagship enterprise for the university, one that supports its wider ambitions to be a global leader in creative practice research. The inaugural online conference in 2021 will focus on the theme of creative technologies and immersive audiences, and indeed going forward this conference will serve to develop and disseminate new methods and approaches to creative media research.

2. Develop creative technology as a research theme

Our focused collaboration with the CCCI has led to a new area of strength in **creative technology**. New creative technologies such as virtual reality, artificial intelligence and binaural sound have been identified as an 'exciting opportunity for a further wave of growth and innovation' in the UK creative industries (Bazalgette, 2017). We have enterprising success stories emerging in this area already, such as Raucous and Immersive Promotion Design Ltd., the latter of which builds on Freeman's research grant awarded by StoryFutures Academy. This research theme will be further enabled by the CCCI's Bristol+Bath Creative R+D (B+B R+D) and will build on the South West Creative Technology Network (SWCTN), a GBP6.5 million project that aims to expand the use of creative technology across the South West. It will be supported in part through our Artswork Media Roundtables, a knowledge exchange group led by Farrar that brings together industry practitioners interested in immersive technologies.

3. Grow our international partnerships and research funding

The unit's external funding during the current REF period stands at **GBP1,151,000** (as recorded in HESA returns), with an additional **GBP605,466** coming from researcher esteem) (see 'Section 3'). We will build on this success by targeting calls that align with the unit's creatively motivated, technology based and community centred approach, namely our primary focus on socially engaged media research and our emerging area of strength in creative technologies. For the latter, we will deepen our focused collaboration with the CCCI, as above;

for the former, we will establish more strategic partnerships with other liberal arts universities, enabled through the [Global Academy of Liberal Arts](#) (GALA) at Bath Spa, a global network of creativity spanning national boundaries to broaden the experience of students and staff (see IEC 4.2.4). Examples of prior partnerships through GALA include: EAFIT University, Colombia, which led to the co-hosted Transmedia Earth Conference in 2017 and Freeman's research into transmediality in Latin America (see **ICS UoA34-2 MMH**), and Concordia University, Canada, which partnered on Clark's research into creative technologies (see **ICS UoA34-1 NET**). Additional international partners such as these will enhance the global impact of our socially engaged media research, exemplifying our research strategy.

4. Establish new outreach mechanisms

We will establish new means of communicating our research, specifically in ways that align with our focus on socially engaged media research. For example, we will develop our [We Make Podcasts](#) platform into a university-wide initiative. We Make Podcasts is a Centre-led venture that allows our academics to reflect on their research and disseminate it more publicly.

5. Build our postgraduate community

Aforementioned targets concerning creative media research, emerging creative technologies and a focus on socially engaged media research will be at the heart of our future postgraduate strategy. Going forward, we aim to recruit 10 new PhD students over the next five years. This will be achieved by aligning the Centre's distinctive themes of digital ecologies, film & social context, and play & multiplatform with the university's strategic university-wide Centres and forming distinctive PhD course profiles: (i) PhD in Digital Ecologies, run in collaboration with the Centre for Environmental Humanities, (ii) PhD in Socially Engaged Film Practice, run in collaboration with the Centre for Transnational Creativity and Education, and (iii) PhD in Creative Technology, run in collaboration with the Centre for Cultural and Creative Industries. These PhDs will support engagement with communities and the creative technology sector.

Section 2. People

Staffing strategy

We can demonstrate substantial progress and success since REF2014. The unit has returned 17 staff to REF2021, increasing from 8 in the last REF cycle. During the REF2021 period, 11 of the 17 submitted staff have published in journals or monographs/edited collections with leading international publishers; 8 of the 17 have produced externally-funded, nationally or internationally shared practice outputs; and all of our early career researchers have completed or are undertaking PhDs. The university has funded the PhDs of Levy, Scott and White.

These successes can be attributed to the unit's staffing and staff development strategy. The School and subject-based academic plans of the unit aim to position research as a core focus of its activity. As promised in our REF2014 Environment Statement, we continue to recruit staff with a track record of research publications and/or practice-based outputs, and all but one of the unit's Category A eligible staff are employed on permanent contracts. The absence of precarious employment contracts in the unit explains why we have retained all but one of the staff submitted to REF2014. In fact, since 2014, our healthy and increasing student numbers on undergraduate programmes have led to the recruitment of a substantial number of new academic staff in the unit (including Curry, Farrar, Freeman, Hobbs, Levy, Manton, Scott, Steele, Tweed, Wilkins). Four of these posts were strategically intended to build capacity for the School's growing BSc Creative Computing programme, while others reflected the UK higher education sector's growing demand for practice-based film and media programmes.

Altogether, the shift in our unit's staffing appointments towards practice-based colleagues has certainly informed our strategic emphasis on enabling innovation in creative media research. The effectiveness of this strategy is demonstrated most immediately by the increase in the number of practice-based outputs we have submitted compared to the previous REF period, and by our two Impact Case Studies, both underpinned by creative media research.

More specifically, and in order to support and facilitate creative media research activity, the Centre for Media Research runs an innovative three-stage 'research production process' for driving forward collaborative projects that encompass socially engaged collaboration across theory and practice, public engagement, and impact. The first stage is Thinking Out Loud, our work-in-progress seminar series (led by Steele), where staff pitch ideas for new research projects. The second stage is We Make Stuff, our Centre-led public engagement series, where up to 50 people from the local creative sector are invited to engage and collaborate with our research. The final stage is Let's Make Stuff, our-Centre led hackathon series, which sees staff and students working with a creative industry partner to prototype research-led media content.

An example of this Centre-led activity includes partnering with Bathscape in 2019, a Heritage Lottery-funded organisation who attended an earlier We Make Stuff event about new ways of using multiplatform media to narrate stories of place and community. Staff and students came together for a two-day Let's Make Stuff hackathon to prototype research-informed film, 360-degree video and social media content, all of which was published on Bathscape's website. This activity has furthered our aim to develop research events as instruments of knowledge exchange and public engagement, as was set out in our REF2014 Environment Statement.

Through this structured research production process, the unit's research becomes **creatively motivated**, **technology based** and **community centred**. We have longstanding areas of excellence in videogame preservation, metal studies and gender and representation, and have since developed world-leading research in newer areas including transmedia studies, small nation cinemas, and media arts practices. We have actively nurtured the development of creative media research in the unit, in particular innovative forms of media practice that span artistic and experimental categories such as participatory documentary production, social media-led walking practices, multi-media installations, and film festivals as a research method.

Further supporting our ambition to be at the forefront of creative media research, the Centre established the International Journal of Creative Media Research (IJCMR) in 2018. IJCMR is an interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed and fully open access academic journal devoted to pushing forward the approaches to and possibilities for publishing creative media research. The journal exemplifies how the unit is leading in this area, providing staff and the wider academy with new possibilities for publishing this kind of creative research, such as DOI-accompanied portfolios. The journal's editorial board includes academics from Canada, China, Australia, and America.

Staff development

The unit is focused on the development of existing staff and the support of new appointments. Our strategy encompasses continual professional development of the careers of established researchers, the mentoring of emerging researchers with industry backgrounds to help build upon their professional practice to become active academics, and the training of PhD students.

Formal mentorship has been at the core of the unit's growth strategy since 2016. Our mentors, comprising Brown, Feasey, Freeman, Newman and Tweed, are drawn from the most experienced members of the Research Centre. The mentees have been primarily either early career researchers (Steele, Farrar, Hobbs and Scott), or colleagues whose professional experience stems primarily from the creative industries (such as Levy, Manton and Wilkins).

Within the unit, staff are encouraged to take part in the Centre-led researcher development activities, namely our Thinking Out Loud, We Make Stuff and Let's Make Stuff event series. Across these activities, staff develop skills in presenting research, forging collaborations, building public engagement into research, and planning and enabling research impact. Meanwhile, the research performance and ambitions of all staff are monitored systematically through annual Staff Development Reviews (with Line Manager) and through one-to-one support from the UoA Leader and Research Centre Co-Directors and Public Engagement Champions. Research Centre members are invited to attend REF Surgeries with the unit's external REF advisors to strengthen research outputs, with a mix of conferences, symposia, public and industry-facing events organised around projects and themes (see 'Section 4').

Beyond the Centre for Media Research at School level, staff development also occurs through our focused collaboration with the Centre for Cultural and Creative Industries at university-

level. For example, the unit's nurturing of research into creative technology has led to a number of our staff being awarded funded fellowships on both B+B R+D and SWCTN. Manton and Clark were awarded Academic Fellowships (2018) (with Manton also securing follow-on prototype funding (2019)) through SWCTN, and both Scott and Clark were awarded Narrative & Emerging Technology Fellowships through B+B R+D (2019 and 2020 respectively). Going forward, we will develop this support structure further via focused initiatives that bring together the Centre for Media Research with CCCI. Aiming to push forward cutting-edge advancements for how creative technologies such as virtual and augmented reality can be embedded into film, media and gaming practices, wider cross-institutional activity comes from the CCCI's Narrative & Emerging Technologies Lab (NET), a research group co-chaired by Freeman that engages with the shifts afforded by new forms of audience interaction, from digital fiction, live performance, film and TV, through to virtual and augmented reality (see **Impact Case Study 2**). NET provides staff with a structure to develop funding bids, engaging with CCCI's partners.

More broadly, the unit follows university-wide procedures on staff development. For example, in line with Vitae RDF, the University employs a Researcher Development Manager through the Research Support Office that provides bespoke training programmes, workshops, online materials and events to suit the individual needs of our researchers and allow them to engage in continual professional development (see Institutional Level Environment Statement 3.3.2). Early career researchers are also given the opportunity to be allocated a mentor from across the university's wider research leadership community, with external coaches regularly brought onto campus to offer colleagues one-on-one coaching for the development of their careers, publications and profiles. All staff are encouraged to apply for the HEQR research funding scheme and the public engagement seed fund to support their research and impact activities.

The university operates a transparent system for research promotion. Colleagues preparing applications are provided with advice from the UoA Leader before applications are considered by the university's Promotions Board. Since 2014, the unit's research achievements have led to two promotions to Readership (Freeman and Farrar) and one to Professorship (Newman).

Research students

We have recruited 20 PhD students since 2014, far exceeding the target of 5 stated in our REF 2014 Environment Statement. The unit recruited 3 PhDs during the previous REF period, which points to our substantial growth and development as a blossoming research culture for talented postgraduate students. 5 of these PhDs have since been completed and awarded, with another 15 currently underway. One of these 20 PhD students secured Bath Spa's fully-funded Studentship as part of the AHRC Bristol+Bath Creative R+D Partnership, while another was awarded a Collaborative Doctoral Award with The British Library through the AHRC South, West and Wales Doctoral Training Partnership (SWW2), where the unit's core subjects of Film, Television and Media are represented (see IES 3.4.4). A further Studentship was secured on a second-supervisor basis through SWW2.

Our approach to recruiting PhD students has been to publish calls for expressions of interest on our Research Centre webpages, aligned to our specialisms of digital ecologies, film & social context, and play & multiplatform. We have attended Information Days for SWW2, promoted the Research Centre at postgraduate conferences, and invested in social media marketing.

In terms of structures for providing support to postgraduate students, the unit's PhD students are all co-supervised by a Director of Studies and a second supervisor, with supervision meetings taking place approximately once per month. The unit's PhD students are integrated into the activities of the Centre for Media Research. Examples include paid Research Assistant roles, co-organising our public events, and editorial, peer-review and guest editing roles on the IJCMR. The unit also benefits from the SWW2's core skills training and student-led activities, which support the development of research skills according to a student's development needs.

The unit also makes use of university-wide procedures, led by the Graduate School and the Researcher Development team, to support the training and supervision of all postgraduate research students. The Researcher Development team runs a comprehensive programme of training, workshops and events which address the development needs of this community.

Equality and diversity

The unit deploys university-wide procedures concerning equal opportunities (see IES 3.5). These include enrolling all new colleagues onto the UK's Professional Standards Framework for teaching in higher education (FHEA), where colleagues are required to 'engage in continuing professional development in subjects/disciplines and their pedagogy, incorporating research, scholarship and the evaluation of professional practices.'

All colleagues in the unit and across the university are also required to complete a range of online learning modules, such as in 'Diversity in the Workplace' and 'Unconscious Bias', which aim to provide an understanding and confidence to deal positively with diversity in the higher education workplace. University-wide initiatives to support equal opportunities and diversity also include the Women's Mentoring scheme and an equality working party, 'Equali-Teas', which provides an open forum for developing action plans to make the university a more inclusive space for all. The university is also a formal partner on Fika, a R&D-informed app inspired by Scandinavian culture that aims to mainstream emotional wellbeing by bringing a daily emotional workout to universities around the world through digital media technology.

Following the process set out in the university's Code of Practice, the unit established a Unit of Assessment Advisory Group, made up of colleagues from across the unit's subject areas. The Unit of Assessment Advisory Group had responsibility for considering output submissions for inclusion in REF2021, ensuring transparency, consistency, accountability and inclusivity.

Section 3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

The unit's external research funding during the current REF period is almost nine times higher than it was in 2014, rising from GBP135,440 during the last REF period to **GBP1,151,000** in 2021. This includes major grants from ESRC, AHRC and Wellcome Trust. The unit has also secured a further **GBP605,466** from individual researcher esteem, including consultancy and other awards.

Funding strategy

Our funding strategy underpinning this success connects closely with the unit's primary research strategy of developing socially engaged media research, and also aligns with our impact strategy, our submitted Impact Case Studies, and our future research plans. The unit has targeted funding bodies and calls explicitly geared towards social, cultural, environmental and heritage dynamics of media, including Wellcome Trust, GCRF-partnered AHRC calls, and Newton Fund. These funding bodies lend themselves to compelling articulations of the social impact of our research, namely on diverse cultural and community groups. Equally, our close collaboration with CCCI and our nurturing of research into emerging creative technologies has led to successful grants for Freeman, Clark and Manton, whose cutting-edge research has advanced the use of creative technology in performance, writing, museums, and games.

Research Grants awarded across the REF 2021 period:

Project	Lead Researchers	Funding Body	Amount Awarded (GBP)
Next Generation. Preserving, Curating, and Exhibiting Videogames: A UK-Japanese Collaborative Approach	James Newman	ESRC-AHRC UK-Japan SSH Connections grants (31/01/19 - 31/07/20)	49,532
British Games Institute research collaborations	James Newman	National Videogame Foundation (01/09/17 - 31/07/20)	25,000

Bristol+Bath Creative R+D (led by University of West of England)	Matthew Freeman (Co-I) with UoAs 27 and 32	AHRC - Creative Industries Cluster programme (01/10/18 - 31/03/23)	642,379
Game Over? Preserving videogames as educational resources for the next generation of game developers	James Newman	ESPRC Sustainable Society Networks (SSN) Researcher Mobility Grant (5/1/15 - 30/3/15)	24,927
South West Creative Technology Network (led by University of West of England)	Matthew Freeman (collaborator) with UoA 27	HEFCE/Research England (01/04/18 - 31/03/21)	551,847
StoryFutures Academy Research Fellowship	Matthew Freeman	AHRC - Creative Industries Cluster programme (01/10/18 - 31/03/23)	20,000
South West Creative Technology Network - Academic Fellowship (led by University of West of England)	Coral Manton	HEFCE/Research England (01/10/18 - 31/12/20)	15,000
South West Creative Technology Network - Academic Fellowship (led by University of West of England)	Ron Herrema	HEFCE/Research England (30/03/19 - 31/12/20)	15,000
South West Creative Technology Network - Prototype Grant: Decoding Complexity (led by University of West of England)	Coral Manton	HEFCE/Research England 30/03/19 - 31/07/19)	28,800
South West Creative Technology Network - Narrative & Emerging Technology Fellowship (led by University of West of England)	Lee Scott	HEFCE/Research England 30/03/19 - 31/07/19)	7,000
An interdisciplinary approach to social skill development	Nigel Newbutt	ESPRC Sustainable Society Networks (SSN) Researcher Mobility Grant (01/01/2015 - 6/04/2015)	28,720

Other associated research income:

Project	Lead Researchers	Funding Body	Amount Awarded (GBP)
(i) 'The Stick House' (ii) 'The Ice Road' (iii) Jerwood Arts project (iv) 'Digital Theatre Innovation and Audiences of the Future'	Sharon Clark	(i) Arts Council England (ii) Arts Council England (iii) Jerwood Arts – Development Programme Fund (iv) Royal Shakespeare Company: Magic Leap Fellowship 2019	(i) 227,000 (ii) 197,000 (iii) 17,000 (iv) 15,000
(i) 'The Internet of Things and Financial Services' (ii) 'Demonstrating Current Practice in Cyber Gaming' (iii) 'Gaming Uncertain Futures' (iv) 'Cyber Storm' (v) 'Automating Gaming Procedures for Games Run by Maritime Warfare Centre'	John Curry	(i) KPMG 2015 (ii) IQPC CDANS 2015 (iii) Pentagon (Office of Net Assessment) 2018 (iv) Australian Government funded contract through University of New South Wales 2019 (v) BAE Systems Ltd 2018-2020	(i) 618 (ii) 579 (iii) 5,200 (iv) 1,457 (v) 62,720
(i) 'Dear Carnegie Hall'	Ruth Farrar	(i) Carnegie Hall 2015 (ii) British Film Institute Film Audience Network 2019	(ii) 27,200 (ii) 2,000
(i) 'Transmedia Earth' (ii) 'Desarmados'	Matthew Freeman	(i) Newton Fund 2017 (ii) Santander Pioneer Award 2017 (iii) Media, Communications and Cultural Studies Association 2017	(i) 1,000 (ii) 5000 (iii) 2,000
(i) 'Women Reclaiming AI'	Coral Manton	(i) Arts Council England	26,442
(i) 'Silent Signal' (iii) 'Notes from the Subsurface'	Charlie Tweed	(i) Wellcome Trust Large Arts Award 2015-2017 (ii) Media, Communications and Cultural Studies Association 2017 (iii) EarthArt Fellowship 2019	(i) 12,000 (ii) 750 (iii) 500
(i) 'Sweet Waters'	Richard White	(i) Arts Council England/Bath Festival Fringe 2017	(i) 2,000

Infrastructure and facilities

At unit level, the Centre for Media Research plays an important organisation role in helping to raise staff awareness of research support resources, bidding opportunities and internal events, promoting such support through a dedicated Virtual Learning Environment. The three research clusters within the Centre for Media Research also serve as significant operational function in enabling research activity, such as the aforementioned Digital Ecologies symposia series, which emerges out of the staff meetings and showcase activity of the Digital Ecologies cluster.

The Centre annually receives internal HEQR funds that finance its core organisational activity, namely our We Make Stuff and Let's Make Stuff initiatives, as well as an annual symposium and online hosting subscription costs for the International Journal of Creative Media Research. This comprises GBP8,490 devolved to the School of Creative Industries annually, with additional funds secured by the unit's staff through our public engagement and seed funding sources. Since 2015, the unit has invested in: Levy's production of the Infertility, the Media and Me documentary, and Scott's creation of its app-based game; Steele's archival research into Wallimage's production data; Tweed's multimedia exhibition of work stemming from his EarthArt Fellowship; Clark's prototyping of new digital performance technologies; Freeman's research into cross-sector uses of immersive technologies; conference travel costs for Levy, Freeman, Brown, Newman, Scott, White and Curry; and allocating start-up funds for Farrar to establish the Shextreme Alliance. We further benefit from the support of the University's other internal funding: Scott was recipient of the Centre for Cultural and Creative Industries Funding Award in 2019, which supported his fertility-themed mobile game for My Fertility Matters.

As a way of directly enabling our strategy to embed community and industry impact into our practices, we have developed Artswork Media – Bath Spa's student-led media production company and digital agency based at Paintworks, Bristol – into a hub for all Bristol-based Centre-led public and industry engagement initiatives. For all Bath-based Centre-led initiatives, we make use of Burdall's Yard, the university's venue for music and performing arts located in the historic centre of Bath. Both Artswork Media and Burdall's Yard provide the unit with a strategic opportunity to extend our research into the South West's thriving creative community.

Elsewhere, the scholarly infrastructure for the unit includes Library subscriptions to high impact and internationally excellent journals (SCImago international journal rankings), such as New Media and Society, Digital Journalism, Journal of Advertising, Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, and Mobile Media & Communication. The unit has also recently purchased the full physical archives of three music magazines to support Brown's research: Melody Maker (1970-74), New Musical Express (1970) and Sounds (1970-76). Library collections directly relevant to the unit include more than 450 journal subscriptions, 18,000 books and 3,000 e-books. The Library's digital collections include Gale OneFile: News, Film & Television Literature Index, Rock's Backpages, and Box of Broadcasts, an archive of over two million off-air television and radio broadcasts. Library resources for the unit are underpinned by a team of Subject Librarians, who provide a defined point of subject-specific contact for research needs.

The International Journal of Creative Media Research also has a dedicated Vimeo account for its video publications. The Commons Asset Store, encompassing audio and edit suites as well as two television studios, is regularly utilised by our staff, such as for our Let's Make Stuff and We Make Podcasts series. More specifically, Levy and Farrar's aforementioned Infertility, the Media and Me project made direct use of these facilities, filming parts of the documentary in the university's studio, as well as conducting participant-led video diaries at Artswork Media.

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

Key Partnerships

Our key partnerships during the current REF period have been instrumental in the work of our two selected Impact Case Studies, in particular. Central to the community targeted research of Freeman and White have been collaborations with EAFIT University and the Colombian Ministry of Culture, as well as key heritage sites in the south west like the Holburne Museum and Bath Preservation Trust (see **ICS UoA34-2 MMH**). Meanwhile, central to Clark's creatively

motivated, technology based research is her work in and with the creative industries, which comes together through Raucous, her own immersive theatre company. Raucous acts as a space to collaborate across academia and industry, with academics, theatre makers and technologists investigating how theatre can be more immersive (See **ICS UoA34-1 NET**). Elsewhere, Newman's ongoing partnership with the National Videogame Museum (NVM) has led to research during the current REF period that underpins Pixel Heads, the NVM's latest educational outreach programme, as well as the Game Inspector exhibits (2015-present). Also emerging from Newman's partnered research activity with the NVM is the Videogame Heritage Society, the first Subject Specialist Network dedicated to videogame history. Its founding members include the British Film Institute, National Science and Media Museum, Museum of London, C64 Audio, Centre for Computing History, RetroHour Podcast, and the British Library.

Beyond those already named, we have developed partnerships with: BBC, Bristol VR Lab, Limina Immersive, IBM, Great State, Conducttr, StoryCentral, Create Studios, and Redbrick House. These organisations partnered with us for Centre-led events, such as We Make Stuff, in order to explore and embed wider practices growing out of our cluster activity. For example, our partnership with Redbrick House – a Bristol-based social enterprise aiming to support young people to develop a career in the creative industries – led to the Tetris Wall of Creativity in 2017, a training event based on Farrar's research designed to support emerging creatives.

Collaboration

Since 2014, the unit has facilitated interdisciplinary collaboration partly by hosting a number of high-profile conferences. These have supported our strategic aim to develop creative media research, such as hosting the annual Journal of Media Practice and Education and MeCCSA Practice Network symposium in 2017 (attended by 75 people) and MIX Digital in 2017 and 2019 (co-hosted with the Centre for Creative Writing, and both attended by over 100 people). MIX Digital has established itself as an innovative forum for the interdisciplinary exploration of media and technology, attracting contributors from the UK, Australia, Europe and America. Other hosted conferences have been a way of facilitating collaboration with other researchers focused on our themes of digital ecologies, film & social context, and play & multiplatform.

For example, Freeman organised three symposia during the current REF period: Kick-Starting Media: Cultures of Funding in Contemporary Media Industries (2016, Bath Spa, 70 attendees), Transmedia UK: Sector by Sector (2017, Bath Spa, 45 attendees), and Transmedia Earth (2017, EAFIT University, 150 attendees), all emerging from the Play & Multiplatform cluster. Also stemming from this cluster was Scott's Interactive Children's Narrative: From Picture Books to Story Apps symposium (2019, Bath Spa, 50 attendees), and three conferences co-organised by Newman: Ludomusicology (2017, Bath Spa, 90 attendees), Replaying Japan (2018, National Videogame Arcade, 45 attendees) and All Your Bass Video Game Music Festival (2018, Royal Concert Hall and Antenna, 50 attendees). Meanwhile, the Digital Ecologies cluster has organised three symposia at Bath Spa: Digital Ecologies and the Anthropocene (Tweed 2017, 70 attendees), Digital Ecologies: Fiction Machines (Tweed 2019, 75 attendees) and Marking the Space: Immersion and Audiences (Clark 2018, 60 attendees).

Contribution

The diversity of the unit's research has allowed for a breadth of contributions to wider society, but our strategic focus on creatively motivated, technology based and community centered research has become key to the creation of innovative media practices and methods of benefit to diverse community groups and of relevance to wider UN Sustainable Development Goals.

For example, Farrar's Shextreme Film Festival (2015-) exemplifies the unit's focus on creatively rethinking what media can achieve in diverse communities. This community centred action research project commissions and disseminates films about marginalised women in adventure sports. Attracting 100 people in its first year in 2015, the film festival grew to well over 1000 people by its third year. Supported by the British Film Institute, the project takes place every year in Bristol, alongside Shextreme Film Tours in the UK and France, reaching circa 1600 people. Emerging out of the film festival, Farrar established Shextreme Film School, which provides unique year-long training about the making of adventure sport films, and which has benefitted nearly 150 women to date. The project's online community, Shextreme Alliance,

with 36 subscribers currently registered, acts as the world's first international industry network for female adventure filmmakers, and which serves as a platform for professional knowledge exchange and mobilisation of women's voices in film. Taking an approach based on public engagement methodologies, Shextreme's push for more opportunities for women adventure filmmakers has shaped the advertising practices of two global companies, Rab and Roxy.

Elsewhere, our strategic engagement with partners that bring creative technology and social priorities together can be demonstrated by Manton's research into conversational Artificial Intelligence (AI). Manton's technology based work plays a leading role in the emerging field of AI, itself an international funding priority for the creative industries (Gov.uk), and has been showcased at the Bath Digital Festival and the British Library. The research addresses the lack of diversity in the development work of AI by using participatory workshops and art installations to 'reclaim' conversational AI systems as a medium for social justice. Her Women Reclaiming AI project (2019) rewrites the cultural myths of AI by developing a new feminist AI voice assistant that critiques the commercial pursuit of today's humanising AI technologies while challenging the bias and stereotyping influence embedded within these technologies.

We are similarly proud of Tweed's research, which again considers how creatively motivated research into digital media can impact wider social understandings, in this case of ecology. Tweed's The Signal and the Noise (2016), for example, was commissioned by Animate Projects and funded by a Wellcome Trust Large Arts Award (GBP12,000). The project was a collaboration with scientist Dr Darren Logan at the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute, exploring the parallels between DNA coding and computer coding through a fictional script and film. This was part of Tweed's larger research endeavour over the past five years to develop new forms of collaboration across the science/art divide, and to identify a range of new shared critical toolkits and research practices that bring the science and art disciplines together. The Signal and the Noise led to Tweed being awarded a prestigious EarthArt Fellowship in 2019 at Bristol University, where he collaborated with scientists in the School of Earth Sciences to research the evolutionary history of life and deep underground ecosystems through film form.

Our staff also make substantial contributions to the research base through leading roles in subject associations and journal editorial, as well as through awards and other appointments.

Leading positions in subject associations

The following roles bring greater international visibility to the Centre for Media Research:

- Brown was a one of a group of scholars that formed 'Metal Studies', out of which emerged the International Society for Metal Music Studies (ISMMS).
- Freeman is Co-Chair of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies Transmedia Scholarly Interest Group (2018-2021), is on the Executive Board of the British Association of Film and Television Studies Society's Screen Industries Special Interest Group (BAFTSS) (2017-), and was on the Executive Board of the Media, Communications and Cultural Studies Association (MeCCSA) in 2019-2020.
- Newman is a member of: International Games Developers Association Game Preservation Special Interest Group; Digital Games Research Association (DiGRA); European Federation of Games Archives and Museum Projects (EFGAMP); International Digital Game Preservation Group; Society for the Study of Sound and Music in Games (SSSMG); and is a juror on the Strong Museum of Play 'Hall of Fame' Selection Committee.

Journal editorial

Our editorial roles in leading journals have helped to formalise relationships with key research audiences, namely those also researching in our fields of excellence: videogame preservation, gender and representation, metal studies, transmedia studies, small nation cinemas, and media art practices. Colleagues serve in editorial capacities for journals in four ways:

- The Centre for Media Research is home to the International Journal of Creative Media Research, co-edited by Freeman, Tweed and Newman (2018-), which published 5

issues during the REF period and serves as a mechanism through which we innovate in creative media research.

- Freeman is Series Editor for the Routledge Advances in Transmedia Studies book series (2018-), which serves as a publication outlet for Play & Multiplatform activity.

- Tweed edited the 'Digital Ecologies and the Anthropocene' issue of Screenworks (8:2 2018) and the 'Digital Ecologies: Fiction Machines' issue of the International Journal of Creative Media Research (5 2020), which published outcomes from the Digital Ecologies symposia; Freeman guest edited the 'Practice and/as Media Industries Research' issue of Media Practice and Education (19:2 2018) and the 'Funding and Management in the Media Convergence Era' issue of the International Journal of Media Management (19:2 2017), which provided publishing platforms for Play & Multiplatform colleagues; and Steele edited the 'Trespassing Borders / Crossing Borders' issue of Trespassing Journal: An Online Journal of Trespassing Art, Science and Philosophy (7 2018), which furthered the global reach of the Film & Social Context cluster.

- Staff within the unit also sit on the editorial boards of eight academic journals, which further raises the profile and visibility of all three clusters. These journals comprise: Metal Music Studies (Brown); Celebrity Studies (Feasey); Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies (Freeman); Game Studies: The International Journal of Computer Games Studies; Replaying Japan; Journal of Sound & Music in Games; Romchip: A Journal of Game Histories (Newman).

Awards and external appointments

Our strategic emphasis on socially engaged media research, together with our developing strength in creative technology, has led to a number of high-profile fellowships and prestigious awards and appointments. Clark won the Bruntwood Judge's Prize for Playwriting, and both her Ice Road and The Stick House works were awarded Theatre Production of the Year (2015 and 2017 respectively) by Bristol 24/7. Tweed was recipient of an EarthArt Fellowship at the University Bristol (2019). Farrar partnered with the British Film Institute to design a public engagement programme devoted to women in adventure film (2018-2019). Newman is part of the International Advisory Group for the ILMS-funded Game Metadata and Citation Project, and is Director of the All Your Bass Festival (2018-). He was part of the International Advisory Group for the Game Metadata and Citation Project (2014-2016) and is a member of the research team at the National Videogame Museum (2015-). Freeman was Visiting Professor at both EAFIT University, Colombia (2015) and Masaryk University, Czech Republic (2016).