

Institution: University of Cambridge		
Unit of Assessment: 27 English Literature and Language		
Title of case study: Book culture outside the academy: enhancing professional performance and influencing cultural behaviour		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2014-2016		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Dr Orietta Da Rold	Role(s) (e.g. job title): University Lecturer in Literature and the Material Text: 1100-1500	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: October 2013- Present Day
Period when the claimed impact occurred: October 2014-July 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) <p>Dr Da Rold's research on medieval handwritten culture, the close examination of medieval manuscripts, and in particular on the use of paper in book production, has contributed to the design and delivery of two MOOCs (Massive Open On-line Course). The 'community enrichment' value of this dissemination is evinced by the range of beneficiaries it reached, including teachers, curators and librarians, calligraphers, retired people, families taking the course together, and postgraduate students. It influenced professional practices, provided access to traditionally unattainable training, and enhanced the well-being of private individuals who were able to pursue their interests.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) <p>Da Rold's research pioneers new ways of looking at manuscripts and materiality. It questions established methods and opens up new ways of thinking about codicology (the study of the book as a whole) and palaeography (the study of medieval handwriting), especially in relation to the dating and production of medieval books. It also puts book history in its social and cultural context as part of a wider holistic framework for the study of medieval literature. Da Rold's research employs a variety of methodologies, some looking broadly across European traditions, others presenting case studies within individual national and local milieus. For example, 'Codicology, Localization and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Laud. Misc. 108' studies the social and cultural context of the circulation and transmission of one manuscript to inform a discussion of local production practices [R1], while 'Medieval Manuscript Studies: a European Perspective', a collaboration with Marilena Maniaci, looks at broader geographical trends and scribal practices [R2]. Da Rold has contributed to the field of Digital Humanities by applying computing methodologies to the study of medieval manuscripts [R3].</p> <p>These research interests culminated in the recent publication of <i>Paper in Medieval England: From Pulp to Fictions</i> (2020). This book provides a detailed analysis of the coming of paper to medieval England, and its influence on the literary and non-literary culture of the period. Looking beyond book production, Da Rold maps out the uses of paper and explains the success of this technology in medieval culture, considering how people interacted with it and how it affected their lives. In this book, Da Rold discusses how the medieval book changed and renewed both diachronically and synchronically across countries, regions and local production milieus. The close examination of medieval manuscripts, and in particular of the use of medieval paper in culture and society, has shown the cultural significance of the medieval book as witness of the</p>		

past, as portent for future models of knowledge, and as key to how handwritten culture connected transnational communities and enabled social mobility. This research demonstrates how a painstaking analysis of medieval materiality yields new information on the construction of medieval books, informing our knowledge of how texts were transmitted and circulated, and giving us a broader picture of pre-modern communication practices [R4]. The research was funded by a British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship (2017).

The nature of Da Rold's research is often collaborative, and a recent joint publication with Professor Elaine Treharne (Stanford University) argues for the initiation of a broader international interest in the production of medieval English manuscripts from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, and the enhancement of pedagogical practices in manuscript studies across different periods, languages and specialisms [R5 and R6]. This collaboration and its aims have partly been fulfilled in the two 'Digging Deeper' MOOCs, which engaged a wider public, including professionals in a range of fields, in a richer understanding of medieval manuscript culture.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

R1. 'Codicology, Localization and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Laud. Misc. 108', in *The Makers and Users of Medieval Books*, edited by Derek Pearsall and Carol Meale (Boydell & Brewer, 2014), pp. 48-59. ISBN: 978-1-84384-375-7.

R2. 'Medieval Manuscript Studies: a European Perspective' with Marilena Maniaci, *Essays and Studies* (2015), pp. 1-24, ISBN: 978-1-84384-415-0.

R3. 'Digital Humanities, Libraries and Federated Searching: The Manuscripts Online Project', *Digitale Rekonstruktionen mittelalterlicher Bibliotheken* (Reichert, 2014), pp. 71-79, ISBN: 978-3895009952.

R4. *Paper in Medieval England; From Pulp to Fictions* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), ISBN: 9781108814287.

R5. *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval British Manuscripts*, ed. with Elaine Treharne (Cambridge University Press, 2020), ISBN 978-1-107-10246-0.

R6. 'Networks of writers and readers' with E. Treharne, in *Companion to British Manuscript Studies*, pp. 129-148 (Cambridge University Press), ISBN 978-1-107-10246-0.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316182659>

RG87260 *From Pulp to Fictions: Paper in Late Medieval Book Culture*, British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship, October 2017, MDMD160036, £106,807.20, 12 months

These publications arising from the research have all undergone peer-review and editorial processes at journals and academic presses. R4 is a field-changing monograph and a certain REF 2021 double-weighted submission. R5 is a major collaborative scholarly introduction to the field of manuscript studies; R2 and R3 also explore methodological possibilities. R1 is a scholarly case study applying these broader insights.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The growing number of online digital images from medieval manuscripts inspired Da Rold and Treharne to design an accessible MOOC bringing their research on the materiality of the medieval book to diverse beneficiaries. In 2014, Da Rold joined in the creation of a two-part course led by Treharne in collaboration with two rare book librarians: Dr Suzanne Paul (Cambridge) and Dr Ben Albritton (Stanford). The course also involved binding specialists and curators from their Special Collections teams. Da Rold contributed to designing the syllabi, including learning outcomes, the bibliography and the selection of the manuscripts for filming. She then contributed video tutorials in her particular field, on paper, codicology and the significance of the codex. Digging Deeper 1: Making Manuscripts (January-March 2015; DD1) and Digging Deeper 2: The Form and Function of Manuscripts (April-May 2015; DD2) were then the first freely available cross-sector online resources covering this material.

[Text removed for publication]. In June 2015, following the period of active certification for both courses, the course completion rate for DD1 was 22%, and for DD2 was 26%, which is well above the average MOOC completion rate of 2-10% [E1]. In the first week of January 2020, 47 active learners were recorded, representing ongoing engagement with the material beyond the period of active delivery of the courses [E1]. Learners enrolled from 124 different countries (including Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Morocco, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Ukraine, Vietnam, and the Holy See) [E1]. Two follow-up workshops were organised in Cambridge by Paul at the University Library, of which one was run by Da Rold in 2015. 48 MOOC participants responded to the invitation and 20 were able to attend the workshop [E2].

The learning resource and the workshops engaged individuals in the heritage sector, informed the professional practices of teachers and education specialists in the delivery of services and teaching, and inspired members of the public to engage with these otherwise inaccessible texts and research outputs.

Impacts on understanding, well-being and access

DD1 and DD2 enabled access to university-level teaching to those without opportunities to learn about manuscripts due to personal circumstances, or lack of access. 'There is nothing of this sort where I live in rural Northern California' [E3] (p 10), one learner explained, and another noted: '[My] health makes travel difficult. That is one of the reasons why I appreciated your class so much.' [E2]

The MOOC has been described by a user as a 'community enrichment course' [E4]. A retired participant tells us: 'As a retiree Medieval MSS got me in its grips [...] plus [I] put together a couple of superficial lectures on same – presumptive but at seniors' residences it's the images as much as the content that is successful' [E2]. Beneficiaries talk about how 'This course has opened my eyes to the depth and complexity of the creation of the manuscripts themselves' [E3] (p 9) and proudly state 'The biggest surprise to me was how gratifying it was to struggle through the paleography exercises' [E3] (p 9). Multiple participants noted it enhanced their experiences of viewing manuscripts in museums [E2, E3]. A newsletter item from the Guild of Book Workers emphasises that this 'form of education allows students from all over the world to participate in classes that would not otherwise be accessible to them' [E5] (p 10). A calligrapher noted 'I have been practising calligraphy for a number of years now, so I am attracted to the subject, and my expectations were exceeded' [E3] (p 21).

Impacts on practitioners and delivery of professional services

DD1 and DD2 helped teachers and education specialists to 'get ideas for how to approach teaching the material in a classroom' [E6]. The MOOC also assisted with these learners' own professional development: 'it also helped me fill in gaps in my own knowledge' [E6], as well as offering an opportunity for academics to reflect the benefits of digital pedagogy in higher education – one taken, for example, by a UK lecturer in their work for a professional qualification [E7].

Heritage professionals who undertook the course reported that it developed both professional practice and personal interest: 'Despite having spent a long part of my professional life working with historical documents, the course has awakened my interest in some details of the making of manuscripts that had gone unnoticed to me' [E3] (p 5). It was consistently noted that it was the combination of palaeography and technical / structural detail (Da Rold's special expertise) that made the course so valuable [E2, E3]. A review by a curator, published by the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, recognized the importance of the project in encouraging other conservators to 'keep an eye on online learning initiatives such as this one [...] The course offered me the opportunity to learn specialist vocabulary used by manuscript historians, and [...] acquire some knowledge about Palaeography, a subject I overlooked in the past' [E8].

Professionals from Anglesey Abbey (National Trust) worked in groups through the course, and five years later a conservator reflected on the value of the MOOC: 'For myself, it allowed me to develop my understanding and my skills; I was able to transfer, for example, the palaeographic skills directly into my job working with primary sources. [...] It has already stood me in better stead for job applications and interviews. I know that one colleague who undertook the course at the same as me has used it as a starting point for developing a career in book conservation' [E9]. She further noted that this learning influenced internal working practices: 'We were able to pass on our understanding to our colleagues [...] and use it in training volunteer book cleaners' [E9]. A Special Collections Librarian at the University of Lincoln, seconded to Lincoln Cathedral, writes: 'The information supplied through the MOOC hugely enhanced my knowledge and confidence in dealing with the Cathedral's manuscript collection [...] I have been able to implement these skills in my career and used the MOOC as a training tool for students and users of the Cathedral collection and in creating displays within the University Library' [E10]. A Medical Librarian working at Aga Khan University, Karachi explains: 'I [...] am confident that this course will help me appreciate the problems faced in matters of conservation and digitization in a developing country's context' [E2].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- [E1] Course participation numbers, statistics and feedback from Stanford University
- [E2] Course feedback from Keeper of Rare Books and Early Manuscripts, Cambridge University Library, 21.09.2020
- [E3] Digging Deeper: Making Manuscripts online reviews from CourseTalk [link](#)
- [E4] *Digging Deeper, my first MOOC* Course review by academic blogger 24.02.2015 [link](#)
- [E5] Guild of Bookworkers Newsletter April 2015, *A Modern Opportunity To Study Medieval Manuscripts* (p 10)
- [E6] Twitter responses to Digging Deeper MOOC 06.06.2019
- [E7] University of Birmingham, PG Cert essay on use of digital resources and technology-enhanced learning for undergraduate students, 18.04.2017
- [E8] International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, '*Digging Deeper: making manuscripts*' review of a free online course 13.06.2015
- [E9] Conservator, Anglesey Abbey testimonial 02.03.2020
- [E10] Special Collections Librarian, University of Lincoln testimonial 28.07.2020