

Institution: Cardiff University		
Unit of Assessment: English Language and Literature (27)		
Title of case study: Developing a new outreach model for Literature Wales through the 'Roald Dahl 100' celebrations		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013 – 2016		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Damian Walford Davies	Professor	01/08/2013-present
Carrie Smith	Senior Lecturer	01/09/2013-present
Heather Worthington	Reader	01/09/2003-06/02/2015
Siwan Rosser	Senior Lecturer	01/09/2001-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 01/08/2013 – 31/12/2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Literature Wales, the national organisation for literary participation and promotion, historically delivered activities for a largely privileged audience. Cardiff research analysed Roald Dahl's fiction for children and adults, and revealed the author's complex Welsh identity; the formative place of Wales in his imagination; and Welsh-related issues of class, diversity and social justice in his work. Through Walford Davies's role as Chair of Literature Wales between 2012 and 2018, these findings influenced a shift in Literature Wales's delivery model from 2013, allowing the organisation to engage with more diverse audiences. The new outreach model was embedded in Literature Wales's strategies in 2016 and 2019. The research also enabled Literature Wales's leading role in the 'Roald Dahl 100' centenary celebrations in 2016, which engaged over 43,000 participants through outreach events across Wales.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>Roald Dahl is often seen either as an English cultural marker or as an 'Anglo-American' writer. <i>Roald Dahl: Wales of the Unexpected</i> [3.1], edited by Walford Davies, asserts the seminal importance of Wales – the country of Dahl's birth and early life – for both the author and his fiction. Reading Dahl through a Welsh lens and identifying the Welsh lenses through which Dahl saw the world are a means of contesting and nuancing the received image of him.</p> <p>The book was published in 2016 to coincide with the centenary of Dahl's birth in Llandaff, Cardiff, with the research undertaken from 2013 onwards. There had previously been no sustained scholarly engagement with the forms and importance of Dahl's (Anglo-)Welshness in his published fiction and manuscript drafts. In addition to conceptualising and curating the volume, Walford Davies contributed an Introduction [3.1a] and one of the book's nine chapters [3.1b], with Smith [3.1c], Worthington [3.1d] and Rosser [3.1e] also contributing chapters.</p>		
2.1 Bringing Dahl back to Wales		
<p>Although Dahl's transnational identities were recognised by his most recent biographer, Donald Sturrock, the importance of Wales in his imagination and social outlook had not been noted prior to the research conducted at Cardiff. Walford Davies's collection shows that, despite the fact that Dahl was only permanently resident in Wales for the first nine years of his life, his work reveals a complex Anglo-Welsh orientation, and, relatedly, a privileging of marginalised groups in society [3.1a, 3.1d].</p> <p>Inspired by the Dahlesque notion of the 'unexpected', the collection defamiliarises Dahl and brings him back to Wales by revealing the country's significance across the full range of his literary output. The research highlighted the following:</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wales as a troubling concept for Dahl, registered in complex – seldom explicit – ways across his fiction [3.1a]; 		

- Dahl's outlook and principles were shaped by Wales's communities, geographies, culture and history, and by his pivotal experiences of cultural and class difference, and cross-class and cross-cultural relationships [3.1a, 3.1c, 3.1d];
- The South Wales industrial experience is an important theme in Dahl's fiction, revealed more explicitly in manuscript drafts than in the published work [3.1c, 3.1d];
- The translation of Dahl's fiction from English into Welsh produces both an uncanny 'Dahl-in-Welsh' and, through particular Welsh phrases and idioms, a distinctive 'Welsh Dahl'. The translated work therefore embodies Wales's two literary languages and the nation's hybrid identities [3.1e];
- Dahl's work promotes the marginalised and underprivileged through ironic commentary on his anglocentric social and cultural allegiances [3.1a, 3.1b, 3.1c, 3.1d, 3.1e].

Walford Davies's decision to include holistic analysis of Dahl's fiction for children alongside his fiction for adults – categories hitherto analysed separately – invests Dahl's output for children with a new status and with new meanings. Cardiff research on place-based readings of the children's fiction (such as *Matilda*, *The BFG*, and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* [3.1b, 3.1d]) confirm the importance of Wales in Dahl's work and his championing of the underprivileged by identifying the following:

- Linguistic innovations forged by Welsh environments and experiences. For example, the hybrid English of *The BFG* can be seen to be derived from Wenglish, a new form of primarily spoken language that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from a fusion of South Wales Welsh and various forms of English [3.1d];
- Welsh markers in the texts – for example, the ways in which Dahl transforms a real-life, pseudo-parental relationship with his family's Welsh gardener (a former miner in the industrial Welsh valleys) into a variety of fictional forms across his work for children [3.1c];
- How Welsh-language translations of Dahl's fiction for children make Dahl 'not quite himself' – a voice both foreign and familiar, resisted and naturalised [3.1e];
- Dahl's resistance to 'cultural institutionalisation' and 'assimilation' by dominant cultures, which underpins his championing of the disempowered and vulnerable throughout the fiction for children [3.1a, 3.1c, 3.1d];
- Dahl's complex acts of resistance and his refusal to be *fully* assimilated into the dominant (English) culture – articulated for example through the imperfect absorption of the BFG into the Establishment ending of Dahl's novel [3.1d].

Reviewer Jeni Williams (in *Gwales*) described the collection as “[A] complete revelation . . . Each of these essays changed my reading . . . I gained an enhanced understanding of the overarching significance of cross-class and cross-cultural relationships in [Dahl's] work”.

In summary, the research undertaken from 2013 and published in the 2016 collection provided new interpretations of Dahl as a Welsh writer and highlighted the representation of marginalised Welsh groups and communities in his work for both adults and children. Walford Davies, as editor of the collection, used this expertise in his role as Chair of Literature Wales. The insights into Dahl's work as an inclusive author who privileged marginalised communities transformed Literature Wales's strategy and practice, as described below.

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

[3.1] Damian Walford Davies (ed.), *Roald Dahl: Wales of the Unexpected* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2016). ISBN 9781783169405

[3.1a] Damian Walford Davies, 'Introduction: Defamiliarising Dahl', pp. 1–10

[3.1b] Damian Walford Davies, 'Dahl and Dylan: Matilda, "In Country Sleep" and Twentieth-century Topographies of Fear', pp. 91–117

[3.1c] Carrie Smith, 'Inscription and Erasure: Mining for Welsh Dahl in the Archive', pp. 11–26

[3.1d] Ann Alston and **Heather Worthington**, “There is Something Very Fishy about Wales”: Dahl, Identity, Language’, pp.119–136

[3.1e] **Siwan M. Rosser**, ‘Dahl-in-Welsh, Welsh Dahl: Translation, Resemblance, Difference’, pp. 135–160

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words - 1600)

Literature Wales’s (LW) mission is to increase the accessibility and impact of imaginative writing; provide early-career writers with opportunities to hone and diversify their skills; and strengthen the range, reach and reputation of Welsh writers and writing. Cardiff research on Roald Dahl **[3.1]** was used to shape the delivery model and activities of LW, leading to engagement with more diverse audiences and marginalised groups. Walford Davies’s expertise on Roald Dahl – in particular, his identification of the author’s Wales-based inclusive social vision – shaped and continues to shape the priorities and decisions of LW, informed by his period as Chair between 2012 and 2018. Cardiff research influenced LW in three key phases:

- Changing the ethos and strategic approach of LW (2013–2016);
- Implementing the new strategy during the Roald Dahl centenary (2016);
- Embedding the strategic changes in LW’s business as usual (2016 onwards).

4.1 Changing the delivery model at Literature Wales

The research findings relating to Welsh identity and themes of inclusivity in *Roald Dahl: Wales of the Unexpected* **[3.1]** were central to a change in LW’s delivery model. Lleucu Siencyn, LW’s CEO, confirmed that prior to 2013, the organisation had not proactively or purposefully engaged with disenfranchised and marginalised groups. Activities were “*crafted for a largely privileged market*” and “*the location and cost of these activities were beyond the means of many individuals and communities in Wales*” **[5.1]**.

Elinor Robinson, former Deputy CEO of LW, stated that the Cardiff research “*set out to ‘devolve’ Roald Dahl in various Welsh contexts, break down barriers between the work for children and the writing for adults, and reveal how Dahl’s imagination was formed by Welsh communities, places and class experiences. This prompted a change in our ethos increasingly towards artist- and participant-led activity, with a bottom-up rather than a top-down approach to planning, development and delivery*” **[5.1]**.

The way Cardiff research shaped LW’s activities can be seen in the company’s 2013–16 Business Plan **[5.2]**. The new, more inclusive outreach model drew on the research themes outlined above to include the following **[5.1, 5.2]**:

- *a ‘devolved’ Dahl, formed by specific communities, places and class experiences:*
 - taking literature to new audiences in unexpected locations;
 - seeking new partners to enhance LW’s reach and diversify its audience;
 - placing literature at the heart of the wellbeing, literacy, employment and skills agendas through work with partners in non-arts sectors;
- *breaking down barriers between writing for children and for adults:*
 - encouraging children and young people to raise their voices and tell their stories, using the new Young People’s Laureate and Bardd Plant Cymru (Wales’s Children’s Poet). LW’s CEO notes that “*at the time, very little academic research on children’s literature was published in Wales; Damian’s book demonstrated how many forms of writing could be deemed ‘literature’; this directly informed LW’s programming in this area*” **[5.1]**.

Describing this move to more inclusive activities as “*a once-in-a-generation, radical repositioning*”, LW’s Deputy CEO stated that it “*was crucial in bringing LW into the 21st-century public arts-funding climate . . . Without it, LW would almost certainly have found its role and function increasingly difficult to justify*” **[5.1]**.

The new model allowed the organisation to increase the cultural participation of “*some of the most vulnerable people and communities in Wales, including young carers, prisoners and*

LGBTQ+ individuals living in rural locations, knowing that they would benefit most from the many personal, socio-economic and cultural outcomes literary participation can engender (e.g. increased employability, resilience to mental illness and empathetic ability)” [5.1].

4.2 Implementing the delivery model through the 2016 Roald Dahl Centenary in Wales

LW identified the 2016 Roald Dahl centenary as a unique opportunity to test the viability of their new activities and approach. The organisation (with the Wales Millennium Centre and the Roald Dahl Estate) used the key themes identified by the Cardiff research [3.1] in the bid to secure £100,000 of Welsh Government Major Events Funding to coordinate a year-long outreach programme – *Invent Your Event*. The programme, which ran January–December 2016 as part of the ‘Roald Dahl 100’ activities, aimed to engage the whole of Wales in reading and multi-genre creative writing activity. It also provided funding for which communities and organisations could bid to create their own events [5.3].

The research findings on Dahl’s Welsh identity were central to securing Welsh Government support for *Invent Your Event*. LW had previously encountered opinions of Dahl among decision makers as “*not really Welsh*” [5.1]. LW’s CEO confirmed, however, that Cardiff’s analysis of “*the ways in which [Dahl’s] work for children and adults is informed in unmistakable ways by Welsh places, people and experiences strengthened LW’s lobbying*” [5.1]. The importance of Cardiff’s research insights into the seminal place of Wales in Dahl’s imagination was clear when the Cabinet Secretary for the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills publicly announced the intention to “*bring Dahl back to Wales*”.

This phrase, which was part of Walford-Davies’s initial proposal for his collection, and which figures prominently in the final introduction [3.1], was repeated by LW throughout negotiations with Welsh Government and underpinned the planning of the year-long programme of celebrations [5.3, 5.1]. LW’s shift to a more participatory, facilitatory and devolved approach was also trialled through the event. Branwen Llewellyn, LW’s Communications Manager, stated: “*The ethos, breadth and reach of Invent your Event were directly influenced by Damian’s research, which revealed how Dahl had been formed by Welsh communities, cultures and places and which returned Dahl ‘home’ to Wales*” [5.1].

Invent Your Event engaged with more than 43,000 people through 183 individual events, workshops and projects run across Wales by community groups with support from LW [5.4]. For example:

- Daubscribblish Doodlesagas: These workshops with prisoners in Parc Prison, Bridgend won an Arts & Business Award in 2017 for engaging prisoners and their families in performance, creative writing and visual arts. Participants noted the benefits for their children, and their enjoyment of the event. [5.4, p.4];
- Clowns and Twits: Enabled young adults with learning disabilities in Monmouthshire to bring Dahl’s work to life through physical movement and the art of clowning [5.4, p.14];
- Majoricalistic Mischief March: Families in ‘Communities First’ areas (some of the most deprived areas of Wales) worked with poet Sophie McKeand and artist Rhi Moxon to explore their surroundings using Dahl’s imagination as inspiration [5.4, p.13].

Feedback from children, young people and adults showed that taking part in the events led to “*improvements in confidence, communication, group activity, literacy, creativity and problem solving*” [5.4, p.16]. For example: “*The writing took me out of myself and helped me write my thoughts*” (participant supported by mental health practitioner); and “*Really enjoyed the experience, [which] gave my son an opportunity to see things that he normally wouldn’t see. It has been fantastic*” (Cardiff City Community Foundation Dads & Lads project) [5.4, p.18].

LW’s broader, more diverse engagement model meant that more than ten times as many people took part in Dahl centenary events compared with events run by the organisation for the Dylan Thomas centenary in 2014. LW’s CEO stated that “*The Dahl 100 celebrations were important for LW as they allowed us to put into practice, on a large scale, the new, inclusive*

mission and vision that Damian's research had helped to form. Our programme of activity during the celebrations enabled us to connect with a far larger and broader demographic in new ways that gave the participants themselves creative agency" [5.1].

4.3 Embedding the delivery model in Literature Wales's current and future strategy

The model and activities put into practice during the Dahl centenary have been embedded in LW's subsequent 2016–19 and 2019–23 strategies. Inclusivity has been further enhanced by supporting groups and communities to develop local literature programmes and events, thereby leaving knowledge and skills as a practical legacy alongside a creative one [5.5]. One new example is the Literature & Wellbeing Funding Scheme, which funds writers to devise and deliver literary activity in their communities. In 2017/18, the project supported nine writers in English and Welsh to run 48 creative sessions with LGBTQ+ groups, prisoners, homeless people, people in a palliative care unit and older people aged 60+ based in seven communities across Wales. Participants produced spoken word videos, pamphlets, showcase performances and individual creative pieces [5.1].

The success of the Dahl centenary proved that LW's new delivery model generated substantive outcomes for participants and supported the organisation's new way of thinking. Walford Davies stepped down as Chair in 2018, but the organisation continues to build on the key themes revealed by Cardiff researchers. LW's Communications Manager states that "*LW confidently embedded a more inclusive approach and an ongoing commitment to providing creative writing and reading experiences for children and young people from Wales – as now outlined in our Strategic Plan, 2019–23" [5.1].*

LW's remit now includes a focus on "*inspiring some of our most marginalised individuals and communities through active participation in literature*", including individuals on low incomes, people with disabilities or long-term illness, and BAME participants [5.6]. A further focus directly traceable to the Cardiff research is on the quality and reach of children's literature in both English and Welsh. Examples of new activities include:

- a new Children's Literature Category for LW's flagship *Wales Book of the Year Award* in 2020, and LW's commitment to improving the quality and sales of literature for children – particularly in Welsh – through partnership with the Welsh Books Council, S4C (the national Welsh-language channel) and the Welsh Joint Education Committee;
- a 'Writers on Tour' scheme to enable more targeted interaction between children/young people and established writers;
- the introduction of a Children's Laureate Wales position.

The former Deputy CEO of LW stated: "*Such initiatives respond directly to the enhanced status of children's writing claimed by Damian in his research . . . they demonstrate our commitment to delivering tangible wellbeing outcomes for people who have not previously accessed literary experience. They therefore enable us quantitatively and qualitatively to justify continued taxpayer support. This is important for the people of Wales and our new audiences because it releases and accelerates the power of literature to improve lives" [5.1].*

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

[5.1] Statements of evidence from Literature Wales Executive staff, signed by the CEO of LW

[5.2] Literature Wales Business Plan, 2013–16

[5.3] Roald Dahl's Centenary 2016: Wales's Year of Adventure . . . A Vision for a Celebration (Literature Wales document, 2014)

[5.4] Roald Dahl 100 in Wales: Invent Your Event/Roald Dahl 100 Completion Report (LW document, 2017)

[5.5] Literature Wales Strategic Plan, 2016–2019

[5.6] Literature Wales Strategic Plan, 2019–2023 (full version with appendix, updated September 2019)