

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: Coventry University		
Unit of Assessment: 33		
Title of case study: Dance, digitisation and intangible cultural heritage		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2012 to 2020		
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:
Sarah Whatley	Director, Centre for Dance Research	Since 1987
Rosamaria Cisneros	Research Fellow	Since 2014
Karen Wood	Assistant Professor	Since 2013
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014 to December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N No		

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

Researchers in C-DaRE have worked with IT developers, custodians of cultural content, dance artists, and marginalised dance communities to create digital applications for dance practices as aspects of intangible cultural heritage (ICH). The research, driven by enabling impact, has been into datafication and transmission of ICH, and the relationship between dance content and machine learning. The research has led to three areas of impact: (1) changes in methods used by IT developers working with dance content; (2) new approaches to curation of dance content and safeguarding practices that feed into wider sector practices; (3) increased visibility for marginalised dance communities.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

The underpinning research of Professor Sarah Whatley, Dr Rosamaria Cisneros and Dr Karen Wood at Coventry University focuses upon how dance, as an embodied practice, calls on new methods for digital tool development in order to archive, annotate, share, reuse and safeguard dance content online.

Through Europeana Space, an EU funded project (2014-2017, G1; <https://www.europeana-space.eu/>), Whatley and Cisneros investigated ways in which ICH might generate commercial revenue. As part of the project, Whatley and Cisneros worked with IT experts and entrepreneurs to develop the apps, Dancespaces and Dancepro. Dancespaces targeted the needs of dance enthusiasts and pre-dance professionals who want to share and explore content about a particular aspect of dance. DancePro provided a tool for researchers and dance experts (e.g. dance artists, choreographers) to access dance content and create metadata (R2, R4).

Through an EU funded project, WhoLoDancE (2015-2018, G2, <http://www.wholodance.eu/>) Whatley, Wood and Cisneros worked closely with technologists to develop apps that capture dance as ICH (in particular, Flamenco and Greek folk dance) and influence ways in which dance is taught, learnt and made. Changes in consumption and use became apparent in audiences and educators through an extended evaluation process, involving 200+ respondents across the dance sector, Europe-wide. Tool development (including for annotation, similarity search, blending engine, hololens experience) revealed how the plasticity of dance needs to be built into software practices (R3, R4).

The role of Flamenco as a vehicle for intercultural communication was the focus of the work by Cisneros in her contribution to the EU-funded RICHES project: <https://www.riches->

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project.eu/index.html (R1). Cisneros organised the Coventry FlamenKo Festival (3-7 November 2014, G4, <https://www.digitalmeetsculture.net/article/the-roma-in-coventry-digital-practices-and-identity-expression/>), designed to educate the public about Flamenco, and to showcase Gypsy/Roma cultural art forms. The Festival offered insights into how engagement with Romani cultural heritage can be sustained; how digital technologies can be used effectively to document and promote these initiatives for larger audiences; and how art can be used as an entry point and vehicle for intercultural communication. 515 people attended the festival including students, academics, artists, citizens and politicians (R5). The research demonstrated that the festival changed audience perceptions of marginalised and minority communities, increased visibility of this community's dance practices, and provided venues with new ways to access history (R5).

The EU funded project CultureMoves led by Cisneros and Whatley (2018-2020, G3) explored the impact that dance and dance content accessible through Europeana, and available via digital technologies, could have on tourism and touristic experiences. They hosted a series of 12 lab-days over 18 months involving 275 stakeholders including dancers, choreographers, artists, academics, CH institutions and architecture MA students from countries including UK, Italy and Portugal. Research showed that dance provides access to 'hidden' aspects of a site, monument, or landscape, and that digital tools can stimulate new stories for making the bridge between dance and tourism (R6).

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

R1. Whatley, S. and Sabiescu, A. (2016) 'Interdisciplinary collaborations in the creation of digital dance and performance: A critical examination'. In Borowiecki, K. J., Forbes, N. and Fresa, A. (eds.) *Cultural Heritage in a Changing World*. New York: Springer, 17-35,

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/bst.305>

R2. Whatley, S. (2017) 'Transmitting, Transforming, and Documenting Dance in the Digital Environment: What Dance Does Now that It Didn't Do Before'. *The Drama Review* 61 (4), 78-95,

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1162/DRAM_a_00693

R3. Cisneros, R., Wood, K., Whatley, S., Buccoli, M., Zanoni, M. and Sarti, A. (2019) 'Virtual Reality and Choreographic Practice: The Potential for New Creative Methods'. *Body, Space, Technology* 18 (1), 1-32, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/bst.305>

R4. Blades, H., Cisneros, R., and Whatley, S. (2018) 'The Values of Leftovers in Dance Research'. *Performance Research*, 22 (8), 144-152,

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2017.1433396>

R5. Cisneros, R. (2016) *SAETA: The Mourning* [online] available from

<<https://rosasencis.org/portfolio/saeta-the-mourning-dance-film/>> and

<<https://Uoa33.coventry.domains/saeta/>> [17 December 2020]

R6. Cisneros, R., Crawley, M-L., and Whatley, S. (2020) 'Towards Hybridity: Dance, Tourism and Cultural Heritage'. *Performance Research* 25 (4), 125-132,

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2020.1842606>

Grants

G1. Whatley, S. (Lead/Coordinator) and Cisneros, R. (SRF) (January 2014 to December 2017) *Europeana Space: Best practice network: spaces of possibility for the creative reuse of digital cultural content (ESpace)*. European Commission: ICT Policy Support Programme, Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme, grant number 621037. Total grant amount: €4,955,849.00 (£4,093,035.69). Available from

<<https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/621037>> and <<https://www.europeana-space.eu/>> [17 December 2020]

G2. Whatley, S. (Named partner), Cisneros, R. (Named team member) and Wood, K. (RA) (January 2016 to December 2018) *WhoLoDance: Whole-Body Interaction Learning for Dance Education*. European Commission: H2020, grant number: 688865. Total grant amount: €3,332,585.00 (£2,459,780.99), funding to Coventry University: €206,973.03 (£152,766.79). Available from <<http://www.wholodance.eu/>> and <<https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/688865>>

[17 December 2020]

G3. Whatley, S. (Team member) and Cisneros, R. (Team member) (September 2018 to February 2020) *Culture Moves*. European Commission: Innovation and Networks Executive

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Agency (INEA), Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), grant number: INEA/CEF/ICT/A2017/1568369. Total grant amount: €383,256 (£345,536.94), funding to Coventry University: €87,151.00 (£78,573.60). Available from <<https://portal.culturemoves.eu/>> [17 December 2020]

G4. Cisneros, R. (Researcher) (3 to 7 November 2014) *RICHES (Renewal, Innovation and Change: Heritage and European Society) - Coventry FlamenKo Festival*. European Commission: Collaborative project (small or medium-scale focused research Project – STREP), grant number: 612789. Total grant amount: €3,008,086.44 (£2,484,829.80), funding to FlamenKo Festival: €2,561.31 (£2,000.00). Available from <<https://www.digitalmeetsculture.net/article/the-roma-in-coventry-digital-practices-and-identity-expression/>> and <<https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/612789>> [17 December 2020]

The scope and range of the peer reviewed publications and competitively awarded research grants are testament to the quality of the research.

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

Since 2014, researchers in C-DaRE have worked with IT developers, custodians of cultural content, dance artists, and marginalised and minority dance communities on research projects driven by enabling impact. They have created a range of digital applications for dance practices as aspects of ICH (S7).

1. IT developers have changed ways of developing tools and interfaces and methods for exploiting and consuming digital dance content while recognising dancers' different practices, needs and expectations. The Innovation Manager of IN2 (S1) on the ESpace and CultureMoves projects (R6, G1, G3), said that his company now *“better understand(s) the unique qualities of dance as an artistic medium, and of the specialist needs of the dance community who would be the eventual end users of the ICT system.”* Collaboration enabled *“a truly user-driven development process, a key aspect for delivering user-friendly software tools”*. In interface development, the technologies have *“transferred to the commercial products that we bring to the market. Our commercial solutions, like the MyMeedia platform for (...) multimedia content, are a direct result of the learning and development that occurred in the creation of the applications for these projects in terms of technology innovation and gained know-how in how to design better systems...”* The Founder and CEO of PeachNote (S5) on WhoLoDance (R3, R4, G2), describes how the collaboration with the C-DaRE team influenced their product development, changing methods for how they *“measure and analyse human motion and expression”*.

2. Custodians of cultural content have changed safeguarding and curatorial practices, with impact on the dance sector. An ICT expert and cultural heritage SME owner (S2), a collaborator on RICHES and ESpace (R1, R2), states that C-DaRE's work has led to rethinking the involvement of 'community' and 'user' in developing digital technologies within cultural heritage organisations, with wider application for other cultural practices and how learning can *“transform the whole sector”*. The ICT expert noted: *“the unique accommodations that dance requires in terms of digitisation is imposing a change on how we consider best practices within the ICH sector. It has made obvious how deficient some of the technologies we rely on are and impos(ed) innovation in how we conduct our work.”*

Changed practices have helped creative influencers to shape sector trends. The co-founder of the REMIX Summits (S3) collaborated on the ESpace project (R2). He said that *“Working with dance experts from the C-DaRE team has made me consider more deeply the body in space, the organisation of the body and the specific concerns of integrating technology with dance and the moving body in other projects.”* This collaboration also had an impact on ACMI X with the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, StartSpace with the State Library of Victoria and Foundry 658, and has *“fed into the programming of the REMIX Summits.”* Whatley and Cisneros's research enabled the entrepreneur to expand his own work into dance which included a collaboration with Studio Wayne McGregor on QuestLab. This allowed the

entrepreneur to “*apply to the creation of ideas about dance and technology, the incubation of these ideas through research and development phases, and business modelling process*”.

3. Awareness has been heightened that combining technologies and dance can raise the visibility of marginalised and minority dance communities. Cisneros’s staging of the FlamenKo Festival (R5) in RICHES (G4) and development of the RomArchive emerged from the confluence of research in dance and technology. The RomArchive has won several awards, the most prestigious being the European Heritage Awards Grand Prix organised by the European Commission and Europa Nostra (S6). The participatory project directly involved the Roma community and has had impact on Roma, Gypsy and Traveller groups by illuminating their own history. The ED of Romani Cultural & Arts Company (RCAC) (S4) said the “*research and resultant festival made clear how the arts, culture and technology can promote the contributions of marginalised groups, be used to disrupt commonly held stereotypes of the Roma people and can aid intercultural communication*”: the research “*would position and represent the Roma people*”. The project also changed perceptions of other communities by making “*clear the diversity in these communities and challeng(ing) stereotypes*”. The RCAC can now evidence the “*capabilities and status of the organisation when applying for future funding programmes, or in advocating for the Roma, Gypsy and Traveller communities to local and national governments*”. The work has expanded, gaining funding from the German Cultural Foundation and receiving attention from the Minister of State for Europe, Michael Roth, at the event ‘Reinventing Roma Inclusion’ at the opening of ERIAC 2019 (S6).

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

S1. Innovation Manager, IN2 Digital Innovations GmbH (2020) *Testimonial evidence letter to Coventry University*

S2. ICT expert and cultural heritage SME owner (2020) *Testimonial evidence letter to Coventry University*

S3. Co-founder & Managing Partner, REMIX Summits (2020) *Testimonial evidence letter to Coventry University*

S4. Executive Director, Romani Cultural & Arts Company (2020) *Testimonial evidence letter to Coventry University*

S5. Founder and CEO, PeachNote GmbH (2020) *Testimonial evidence letter to Coventry University*

S6. European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards, RomArchive – Digital Archive of the Roma, Germany [online] available from <[RomArchive – Digital Archive of the Roma, Germany - European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards](#)> and <<https://eriac.org/>> [17 December 2020]

S7. Centre for Dance Research *Dance & Intangible Cultural Heritage* [online] available from <<http://ichanddance.coventry.ac.uk/>> [17 December 2020]