

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> University of Winchester		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 34		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Enriching the public understanding of Victorian popular literature and culture as education and as driver of cultural strategy		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2010-2018		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> Neil McCaw	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> Professor of Victorian Literature and Culture	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> 2005-March 2020 (died in service)
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2014-20		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Research undertaken on Victorian popular literature led to public education through two museum exhibitions, leading on to an animated short film, a textbook, and GCSE-level in-school mentoring and teaching. Visitor numbers to the exhibitions exceeded 200,000, including a number of targeted educational and hard-to-reach groups, for whom specific educational projects were spun off.</p> <p>These <b>cultural</b> and <b>educational</b> impacts stimulated local investment in exhibition design and improved public perceptions of the city hosting the exhibitions.</p> <p>This in turn led to a further layer of impacts on <b>cultural policy</b>, via contributions to regional cultural policy and specific policy on the development of regional cultural attractions.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>McCaw's research has helped stimulate the significant growth in academic interest in Victorian culture and history, and especially Victorian popular literature, such that the latter in particular has managed to throw off its previous reputation as the poor relative of the more renowned genres of Victorian literary expression. This underpinning research relates to five distinct, though interrelated, projects that have been part of an ongoing engagement with popular genres and forms:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) This monograph, researched between 2008 and 2010, explored a range of British adapted television franchises and the varying ways in which they related to their twentieth-century audiences. The research was textual and sociological, examining detective and crime stories as forms of 'cultural criminology', and establishing the variety of ways in which these refract prevailing political and ideological attitudes to crime and punishment in the ways they rework and re-imagine originating texts. The findings that had most impact were those related to Sherlock Holmes adaptations, and the extended work on how Holmes audiences have, since the later nineteenth century, responded to and engaged with texts featuring the Great Detective.</li> <li>(2) Research for this book chapter further explored some of the findings at the core of the monograph, especially those related to Sherlock Holmes audiences and the particular ways in which certain features of the Holmes legend appeal to audiences of different kinds. In examining how the 'Victorian' ideology of 'Self-Help' re-appears in Holmes adaptations across the twentieth century, it shed new light on the flexibility and malleability of these detective fictions as cultural forms that are appropriated and digested within a range of cultural</li> </ol>		

contexts.

- (3) An edited facsimile edition was produced as a consequence of McCaw's longstanding engagement with The Arthur Conan Doyle Collection, for which he was Academic Director from 2005. The first person to have access to the original manuscript of '*The Adventure of the Creeping Man*', McCaw produced a scholarly manuscript edition, along with introductory essay, annotations, and additional materials related to the story. The introductory essay examines the value judgements cultures make regarding the status of detective and science fiction as popular genres, the extent to which such aesthetic judgements can belie the sophistication of the texts under consideration, along with a more detailed review of the development of science fiction in particular.
- (4) Research for this journal article involved a detailed, lengthy exploration of Victorian magazines and journals, and in particular their representation of narratives of crime and detection, and evolved into an exploration of the blurring of genre boundaries within these crime narratives during the nineteenth century. In addition to exploring the methodological research questions raised by utilising such digital resources, the paper explored in detail the intermingling of crime narratives of various kinds during the Victorian period, and how public perceptions of society and criminality were being shaped by this reading context – this has been fundamental to McCaw's activities helping the wider public to understand the importance of popular literature in shaping ideas and expectations.
- (5) The *Historical Dictionary* brought together McCaw's knowledge of the Conan Doyle archive with his historical research into Victorian popular culture, to produce a deep and detailed guide to Conan Doyle's oeuvre and its historical and cultural contexts.

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

1. McCaw, Neil, *Adapting Detective Fiction: Crime, Englishness and the TV Detectives* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010); this is a peer-reviewed monograph.
2. McCaw, Neil, 'Sherlock Holmes and a Politics of Adaptation' in Catherine Wynne & Sabine Vanacker, *Sherlock Holmes and Conan Doyle: Multi-Media Afterlives* (London: Palgrave, 2013); a peer-reviewed chapter in a volume of essays written by Conan Doyle/Holmes scholars.
3. McCaw, Neil, *The Adventure of the Creeping Man: facsimile edition* (Winchester: Winchester University Press, 2017); a scholarly edition of archival material. Available from the HEI.
4. McCaw, Neil, 'Victorian Murder and the Digital Humanities', *Humanities*, 7(3), 82 <https://doi.org/10.3390/h7030082>; a peer-reviewed journal article.
5. McCaw, Neil. *Historical Dictionary of Sherlock Holmes* (Lanham, MD and London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2019); a work of original scholarship combining archival research with research on Victorian culture. Submitted in REF2.

Outputs 4 and 5 were assessed by external reviewers at 3\*

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

Impacts took the form of a series of layers, starting with the initial **cultural** and **educational** impacts of the museum exhibitions, aspects of which formed the stimulus to impacts in **commerce** (investment in and developing capacity in business), and local authority cultural **policy**. Further **educational** and **cultural** impacts were spun off, extending the project's reach socially and in terms of numbers.

#### **Initial Cultural and Educational Impacts: From Making the Archive Accessible to Public Museum Exhibitions**

**Impact case study (REF3)**

As the Academic Director of the Lancelyn Green Conan Doyle Collection since 2005, McCaw oversaw the processes by which its 60,000 items were catalogued and archived in such a way as to make them available to the public. Over the period 2014-17 he worked with archivists, designers, curators, and librarians to open up the collection digitally, thus reaching publics via both archival and digital modes of access.

Deeper personal and group impact was achieved via two public museum exhibitions. The initial 'A Study in Scarlet' exhibition, which has remained in situ at Portsmouth Museum since 2008, has received in excess of 200,000 visitors, and the newer 'You Don't Know Sherlock Holmes, Yet' display has, since opening in 2018, been visited by in excess of 100,000. There have also been targeted education projects linked to the later exhibition which have engaged a range of marginalized and hard-to-reach social groups, including young carers, looked after children, and young people outside mainstream education, as well as those with disabilities. The visitor research that has been conducted suggests this has all had a significant impact on their knowledge and understanding of nineteenth-century literature and culture, Sherlock Holmes and Arthur Conan Doyle, as well as the regional history of Portsmouth and its environs [C]. Both the general public and specific, targeted hard-to-reach groups [E], such as looked after children, young people from difficult backgrounds, and partially-sighted and blind support groups, say that they have both learned new things, understood the nineteenth century in new ways, and also changed their perceptions of the present as a result. For instance, 87% of all visitors say that the exhibits encouraged further debate and discussion, 99% of visitors felt that they learnt something new, and 79% said they would return for a second visit.

**Commercial Impacts: Commissioning of Exhibition Design Company**

One of the related consequences of the development of a new Sherlock Holmes museum exhibition was to create a project specification which would go out to tender, and under the auspices of which McCaw would work with museums and archives professionals from Portsmouth City Council as well as a private sector heritage design company. The company appointed was DrinkellDean (<http://www.drinkalldean.co.uk/>) who were employed – with a working budget of in excess of £100k - to produce an in situ design plan and with whom McCaw worked closely in refining the initial conception [A].

**Policy Impact: Local Authority Strategy**

As a consequence of the museum exhibition's impact on Portsmouth visitors and residents, McCaw was commissioned to write an evaluative report for Portsmouth City Council in 2017, which was in the process of employing "The Visitor Attraction Company" (<https://thevisitorattractioncompany.com/>) to conduct a feasibility study into a regional Sherlock Holmes visitor venue. McCaw's report explored the global potential for such an attraction, looking at comparable nineteenth-century and Sherlock Holmes-related attractions across the world, and then linking this with national cultural and heritage priorities. His grasp of the global presence of Holmes across various continents (a product of both his research and his experience mounting exhibitions) was central in arguing the case for a feasible new visitor attraction in the UK. It was, as such, crucial in helping the cultural services and tourism departments of the local authority to frame its own longer-term strategy for seeking external funding and support for a potential future visitor attraction of this kind [A]. This has led to the establishing of a working group drawing in local authority professionals, external consultants, and heritage attraction planners, with McCaw providing the academic input. [A]

**Further Educational Impacts: Secondary School Teaching and Mentoring**

In 2015 and 2017 McCaw spent a year – each time – teaching and mentoring a GCSE English cohort of 35 pupils in an English secondary school based in an area of significant economic

deprivation – Crookhorn College, Hampshire; in each instance he taught the Language and Literature curriculum for the entirety of their Year 11 studies. His task was to help them better comprehend a range of literature, as well as writing and reading skills, in order to prepare them for their eventual examinations. Key to the more recent versions of the GCSE English Literature syllabuses have been the increasing focus on the ‘context’ of such literature – and this is where the work McCaw was doing towards the ‘Victorian Murder’ article [section 3 item 4] was priceless. He was able to help the young people better understand the wider cultural context of the works they were studying, and how the interrelation of popular texts was a key feature of how nineteenth-century people saw themselves and the world around them.

At the end of both years, the overwhelming majority of the Year 11 students exceeded expectations in the GCSE grades they achieved, with the Headteacher praising the ‘extraordinary impact’ of the work McCaw did with them and the excellent examination results: ‘the significant increase in the performance of the higher attaining students at the College’ [B].

#### **Further Cultural Impact: TED-ED Animated Film**

McCaw scripted an educational film about Sherlock Holmes and Victorian culture: ‘Who Is Sherlock Holmes?’. The film has, since 2016, been featured on the TED-ED online education channel as well as their Youtube platform, and has been watched by more than 1.5 million viewers, of whom 20,000 have offered positive comment regarding the film’s educational value, or else who have engaged with the accompanying educational resource that asks them to see Sherlock Holmes within the context of Victorian popular culture and the many other texts within that [D]. Visitor comments include: ‘A fascinating new look at the world of Sherlock Holmes’ and ‘So many things about the Great Detective that I did not know’. [D]

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

[A] A written testimonial from a senior representative of the Local Authority Community and Cultural Services Department of Portsmouth City Council, detailing all of the work on the three museum exhibitions, their visitor numbers, and the role of McCaw’s research in local authority policy/strategy documents.

[B] A written testimonial from a secondary school Headteacher detailing the nature of McCaw’s work in the school, plus the extent of the positive impact during the two spells in which McCaw supported the school – including on final GCSE examination results.

[C] An exhibition audience survey report, based on data gathered from a range of visitors and visitor groups, in terms of the nature of their experience, what they learnt, and how it changed their perceptions.

[D] User data and feedback related to McCaw’s TED-ED short animated film, “Who is Sherlock Holmes?” and its associated educational resources.

[E] Museum exhibition feedback from targeted hard-to-reach groups for whom bespoke education projects were created that focused on the “You Don’t Know Sherlock Holmes, Yet” exhibition.