University Centre Somerset

Part of Bridgwater & Taunton College

RESEARCH & SCHOLARLY ACTIVITIES

2016/2017 showcase

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WELCOME

This is the fifth publication showcasing scholarly activity and research undertaken by staff over the last academic year.

I am delighted that it is the first as a combined institution and as the University Centre Somerset.

The research and scholarly activity project was established to support members of staff to develop their research skills and become more research active. The aim is to feedback into the curriculum and enhance the student experience, supporting the College's aim of preparing students for further study and their chosen careers.

I am delighted to see the combined range of expertise from all the areas coming together in one publication. The diverse range of skills and expertise that we have across the three campuses is clearly demonstrated. This is a testament to the professionalism of staff who are engaging with their subject areas, with employers, in the development of teaching and learning and in the development of new curriculum.

I would like to congratulate all those involved and thank them for their contributions to the growing culture of research and scholarship within the College.

ANDY BERRY
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Bridgwater & Taunton College

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Engineering

Higher Education Academy's Framework for flexible learning in Higher Education: how does it help our full-time and part-time learners?

Abstract: The Higher Education Academy (HEA) has developed a series of strategic frameworks on core sector priorities widely used by higher education institutions (HEIs) across all provisions. One such framework is the flexible learning in higher education, which offers a structured approach that helps with increasing the degree of flexibility in teaching, learning and assessment (TLA) activities at different levels. It is therefore imperative to effectively inspire our students, both full-time and part-time, to achieve excellence, and we must strive to derive the optimum benefit from these frameworks. We intend to test the effectiveness of an equal degree of flexibility on a group of full-time students who, in theory, invest more time in studies (time in College); and a group of part-time students who invest less time on studies (time in College). However, the measure of learner success and achievement depends, in addition to exposure to appropriate learning material and support, on an individual leaner's attitude and a willingness to effectively engage with learning materials. The outcome of this study is expected to provide reliable data on the effectiveness of selected approaches and methods and suggest ways for delivering excellent teaching practice.

Introduction

The effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment (TLA) activity is measured by the positive impact it has on learners. Learners' experience and progression is significantly influenced by their exposure to a safe, inclusive and flexible learning environment. It is important to ensure that learning materials and activities are appropriate for the level taught and that learners must play a prominent role in the programme of learning. In addition to engaging learners to actively participate in the learning process, they must be supported by introducing numerous sets of opportunities that will stimulate the brain to act as a result; they must also be stretched and challenged. Individual learners' traits must be identified and acknowledged, such that no learner or group of learners are disadvantaged based on their background or disability. Learning material must be designed so that learners of different backgrounds, needs, abilities and traits will be exposed to fairness in support, taking into consideration their needs and abilities, so that they can achieve their very best inside and outside the classroom environment.

Learner engagement through partnership and flexibility in learning formed the core of the Higher Education Academy's (HEA) frameworks series. These frameworks, if effectively implemented, have the potential to enhance and improve learner experience, retention, success and achievement. In this study, we intend to explore in full the embodiment of the framework for flexibility in higher education, exposing a cluster of full-time and part-time learners and measure the effectiveness of a selection of delivery approaches and methods. It is evident that the full-time learners have more timetabled hours in College, compared to the part-time learners with relatively few timetabled hours. Based on this, it may appear that the part-time learners are relatively disadvantaged. However, this might not be the only factor that influences learners' achievements. Actually, achievement also depends on an individual leaner's attitude and willingness to effectively engage with learning materials.

Framework for flexible learning in higher education

This framework offers a structured approach to how increasing degrees of flexibility can be implemented by Higher Education Providers (HEPs) at many different levels: institutional, faculty, department, and programme. The core values of this framework include inclusivity, equity, lifelong learning, social responsibility and collaboration. In addition, the framework highlighted four (4) key areas of focus: technology-enhanced learning, employment, institutional systems and structures, and pedagogical approaches (Higher Education Academy, 2015).

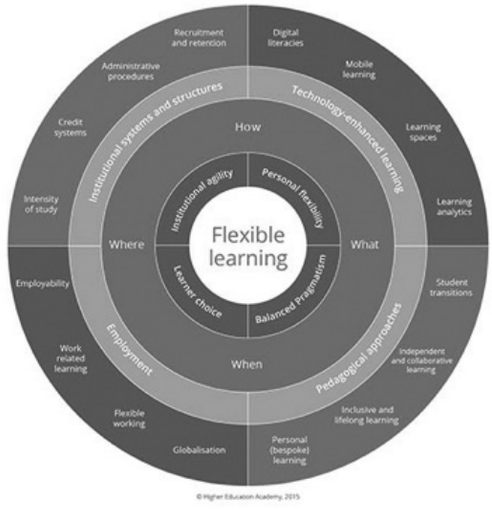

Fig. 1: Framework for flexible learning in higher education (HEA, 2015)

The use of technology to enhance teaching and learning activities has been rewarding. These offer the learner the flexibility (as well as the option) to access learning materials anywhere and anytime. Enthusiastic learners will set themselves a programme of study around work and home life, for example. With this, the part-time learners will be exposed to the same materials as the full-time learners and hence they are not disadvantaged in this regard.

Study approach

In this study it is intended to select a group of fifty full-time and fifty part-time learners and design flexible learning programmes based on the provision and tenets of this framework. Both groups will be exposed to the same treatment (programmes). These programmes will be carefully selected, taking into account the learners' needs and different choices of approaches. These will include the traditional face-to-face teaching, flipped learning (Bergmann and Sams, 2012), discussion groups, and learner-take-the-lead methodology (Parkhouse, 2016). For all approaches, we will incorporate engagement tracking in order to keep records of learners' engagement with the materials and activities.

We intend to explore the effectiveness of these approaches, as well as the relationship between effective engagement and success. These will be compared and conclusions will be drawn. Data collection methods will include distribution of structured questionnaires to the group of learners involved. This will guide the design and production of learning material and delivery methods based on learners' choice. Interviews will also be conducted and learners' assessment results will also form part of the data to be processed.

Conclusion

The College's HE provision has been expanding in the past few years. There is therefore a need to take part in research activities that will enhance the quality of our provision, as well as forming part of the nationwide HE research community. It is expected that the results of this study will guide our practice to deliver excellent quality teaching to our students and to share good practice within the academic community.

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AILEEN GLEN
Advanced Practitioner
Art & Design

Supported Experiments

I have been interested in supported experiments for a number of years and, following the merger of Bridgwater College and Somerset College, I was tasked with trialling supported experiments across the different centres. Supported experiments are a form of action based research designed to help lecturers identify an area of their teaching practice that they would like to improve. The cycle offers coaching and an opportunity to reflect on progress, which supports lecturers to effectively implement new approaches in their practice. This process was developed by Geoff Petty:

> Research shows that if teachers are to improve, they must spend a little time each week deliberately experimenting with new approaches. While they experiment they will need the support of feedback and coaching. Without 'supported experiments', or something very like them, teaching will not change, and nor will student success rates (Petty, 2009, cited in Miles, 2010, p. 40).

In 2010 a Supported Experiments action research was run successfully by Joanna Miles at John Ruskin College:

> The project was designed to give teachers time to reflect, develop and share good practice. It was hoped that staff would feel free to try out new ideas without fear of negative consequences, adopting the mindset that every experiment would be successful as learning would take place for the experimenter and impact would be assessed (LSN Learning, 2011, p. 1).

Supported Experiments at Bridgwater & Taunton College

In total, six lecturers took part in the Supported Experiments cycle: three at the Taunton Campus and three at the Bridgwater Campus. The areas of focus varied, from considering approaches to facilitating learning in the classroom to those that were student led rather than teacher facilitated. There was also a lecturer who wanted to experiment with methods to inspire disengaged learners.

At the start of the cycle I organised a group coaching activity, which enabled the lecturers to identify the area of their teaching that they wanted to improve or develop. At this point I gave examples of evidence-based methods that the lecturers could choose to adopt for their experiment. I emailed more in-depth research such as Reuven Feuerstein's studies into 'Metacognition', Geoff Petty's work on teaching Generic Skills and also 'Effective Reinforcement for Motivation' (Petty, 2017).

We met a further two times over the next 8 weeks. In these sessions I offered coaching, or the participants took it in turn to coach each other. The coaching involved asking questions rather than giving solutions or answers, enabling the lecturer to identify for themselves the solution to any problem or sticking point.

Although only a small number of staff took part in the supported experiments trial, the impact on their practice was significant. The feedback from those who took part has been very positive, sometimes giving more food for thought in terms of developing professional practice.

The participants fed back that the resources I provided on evidence-based methods to improve teaching and learning were very helpful, and the coaching aspect allowed time to gain insight into sticking points or negative habits that they had developed.

The benefits of Supported Experiments are stressed by Mandeep Gill, the Vice Principal of John Ruskin College:

> *This was about recognising not the value of CPD but the value of having effective CPD. The Supported Experiments cycle develops coaching skills, project skills, and most importantly, develops the skill to try something for the benefit of the learner, regardless of outcome. It develops the culture of trying things without fear to improve learners and learning* (LSN Learning, 2011, p. 4).

The effectiveness of supported experiments is clear: they give staff the opportunity to practise and make mistakes and to try out new ideas in a structured way. In order to be really effective in improving practice, the experiments need to be adopted as a whole college approach to staff development. There are many benefits to implementing supported experiments; they encourage the teacher to take ownership of their development and put the focus on teaching and learning. They also help to embed coaching in the college and give an opportunity to share good practice.

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ANDY HOWELL
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Art & Design
Media Make-Up

Developing industry links and employability in Media Make-up

My research project was devised with three aims. Firstly, to develop the on-going 'Artchive' video interview resource and use this as a strategic way to open a dialogue regarding the second aim, which was to develop industry links and engagement with our Media Make-up BA and FDA programmes. These goals were also initiated with the third aim in mind, which was to explore the possibilities of securing student work placements and graduate trainee employment opportunities.

At the start of this project I spent a lot of time using contacts in the industry to get in touch with accomplished artists that could raise the profile of our course just by their involvement with us as an institution. I targeted key names that have international reputations. My strategy was to aim high and be ambitious. I attempted to contact the five best-known British artists in the Make-up FX industry. They are Neill Gorton (IMBD, 2017), Shaune Harrison (IMBD, 2017), Stuart Bray (IMBD, 2017), Kristyan Mallett (IMBD, 2017) and Barry Gower (IMBD, 2017). I had m*et al*l of them already and knew several of them reasonably well through trade shows, I was also briefly trained by one of them in the past. It was felt that using my connections with these individuals was more likely to elicit a response than approaching people that did not know me at all. My foreknowledge of these people had also prepared me for how difficult it is to arrange meetings with them. These individuals have the highest profiles in this country and were the most likely to be able to provide work placements for our students or give interviews for the Artchive that would attract the most attention.

These people were extremely difficult to contact. I tried to contact them via email, phone, text and social media where possible, to maximise my chances. The results of these communications are listed below.

Neill Gorton

Neill is probably Britain's best-known Make-up FX artist and has won numerous awards including an Oscar. Neill has already agreed to be interviewed for the Artchive. It has been difficult to find a time for this, but he has agreed to be interviewed at a trade show if he has the time. Neill is usually booked as a speaker and does demonstrations at the trade shows he attends, so it not easy for him to find the time at these events. I will be seeing him at the IMATS trade show in London in May 2017 (IMATS, 2017).

Neill also runs seven of the largest businesses connected with the media make-up industry (links to them can be found via Neill Gorton's website). I have therefore approached him about student work placements and graduate trainee posts. He referred me to HR people at his company Millenium FX and I have spoken to them several times regarding this. They have given clear instructions as to how graduate trainees should apply, which I have communicated to my 3rd year students. They also informed me that they take several students on work placements each year. I have information on how to apply for these positions for next year's student cohort, if we can logistically manage this in their curriculum, and if they can afford to do this financially.

Neill has been happy to engage with us over recent years and promote his range of products and materials. He has visited the College several times in the past due to his links with my colleague Vikki Muse who worked for him in the past. I was also fortunate enough to train with him several years ago for a week focusing on silicone prosthetic materials and processes, so overall we established a good collaborative partnership with Neill. However, his fee is approximately four times our day rate for visiting lecturers, so our interaction with him is based on his good will.

Shaune Harrison

The first major achievement of the project was securing engagement from one of the world's foremost Make-up FX artists, Shaune Harrison. He has been established in the film industry for 27 years, so getting his engagement was a huge step forward for the reputation of our courses. His work is followed by tens of thousands of fans and industry professionals around the world. His work includes the Harry Potter films, Star Wars and Game of Thrones, amongst many other blockbusters.

I managed to get Shaune's phone number through another contact and invited him to help me to set a project for our BA students. I spoke to Shaune many times to discuss this, and he agreed to come in to help launch the project brief. He also did a live demonstration, a lecture about his career and gave tutorials to all of the students.

Shaune Harrison in tutorials with our students

I ran the project for him and he returned to see the students' work come to fruition on their assessment day. He also gave all the students feedback and advised staff on new materials, processes and industry developments.

Social media Facebook post from New York IMATS 2017 crediting Katie Gibson @kgmakeupfx

Shaune Harrison helping to assess our students' work

Shaune's engagement was actively supported and encouraged by my colleague and course leader Brodie Nichols, who has been particularly helpful with this project. His attendance at the assessment day was particularly useful for us. One of our students, Katie Gibson, impressed Shaune so much with her work, that he commissioned her to make a wig as part of a character make-up for a demonstration in New York and London at the International Make-up Artists' Tradeshows. In our industry this is the largest platform there is.

Social media Instagram post from New York IMATS 2017 crediting Katie Gibson @kgmakeupfx

I also suggested to Shaune that Katie would make an excellent assistant for him at the London IMATS at the end of May this year. This will mean a huge amount of exposure for Katie, because her name will be credited in publications and press as his assistant and also for making the wig used in the character make-up demonstrations, the images of which will be circulated for many years

Social media Facebook post from Shaune Harrison crediting Katie Gibson @kgmakeupfx

to come. In addition to this, Katie will be wearing our course details on a printed T-shirt that has been made and approved by the University Centre Somerset's marketing department for the event. This publicity will place us on the international stage.

Shaune Harrison's Studio in Manchester

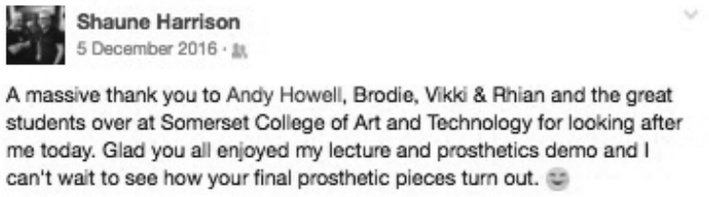
The connection with Shaune was strengthened further by a visit that I made to his studios in Manchester. My visit had been arranged with the intention to interview Shaune as part of the Artchive video resources development. The interview did not take place because Shaune's studio was very busy that day and he did not feel it was appropriate to neglect his other clients and commitments to them.

The visit was however very worthwhile. We discussed the possibility of our course providing Shaune with students for work placements. His response was that he might be willing to provide a limited number of graduates with short work experience placements, but was concerned about the potential for error with second year students working on important projects and felt that third year students would be unable to commit to placements due to their degree workloads. He was also uneasy about students paying for their own accommodation and working for free for him, therefore putting them under unfair financial stress. He suggested that the College should consider paying for their accommodation in order to make each placement worthwhile. Shaune's concern for the fairness of the arrangements was taken on board and has been discussed since these negotiations. Discussions regarding this are on-going at this point.

We went on to discuss the idea of work placements for recent graduates that wanted work experience. Shaune felt this was a more feasible option and he named two students, Amber Sorbie and Victoria Dracup Slee, with whose work he had been impressed during the project that we had run together. Shaune agreed that it would be mutually beneficial for these students and himself, if they were to come to work with him during one of his busy periods later in the summer or the autumn for a week or so. These arrangements have been left open until the students' coursework commitments are finished, and Shaune returns to the UK after a spell working on a film project in Lithuania.

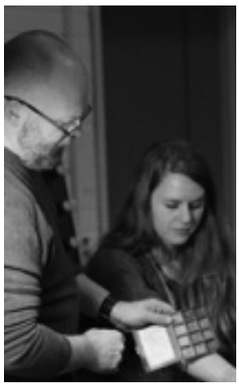
Shaune also mentioned that his assistant had recently left his employment to move to Hollywood in order to further her career there. He expressed his interest in our student Katie Gibson and her role as his assistant at IMATS may lead to further work with Shaune in this role. I have no doubt that he will be impressed by Katie's commitment, efficiency, professionalism and character.

Shaune has also shared images of our students' work on social media where he has tens of thousands of followers, giving great exposure for our course and our students. His social media posts have also repeatedly praised the quality of the staff team and the student work at University Centre Somerset.



Social media Facebook post from Shaune Harrison

Stuart Bray



Stuart Bray and David Power's visit

I tried to contact Stuart using various methods, but his work on Game of Thrones rendered him unavailable. Stuart did eventually contact us to notify us that he would visit us and do a demonstration for the students with a mutual friend of his and ours, David Power. Stuart's visit was one of the highlights of the students' year and he performed to a packed lecture theatre, where he did an inspiring live demo and spoke at length about techniques, materials and processes. He also gave his contact details to all of our students and invited them to ask his advice on any technical difficulties they might encounter. Many students have since been in touch with Stuart and he has replied to all their enquiries with expert advice.

Stuart Bray and David Power of PS Composites visit University Centre Somerset

Social Media post on the PS Composites' Facebook page

Stuart had agreed to be interviewed on the day for the Artchive, but his lecture was so popular that it over-ran with those attending happy to have only a couple of comfort breaks and a 20 minute lunch break. As a result, the interview was 'postponed', and we agreed to carry out an interview at IMATS. I enquired about work placements with Stuart, but he does not employ anyone. He works as a lone freelancer as this gives him the freedom to take whichever work he chooses. He stated that he prefers 'not to be anyone's boss'.

Kristyan Mallett

Kristyan Mallett is probably the most prolific artist in the UK at this time. His company KMFX employs more people than any other in the UK. Kristyan has had links with the College in previous years. I managed to invite him in to run a project with me for the students three years ago, and he was the guest speaker at the graduation ceremony in Taunton that year. He has also offered six of our graduate students trainee positions in recent years. Since his last visit to us, Kristyan has been nominated for multiple awards including BAFTA's and Oscars, and he is now booked up years in advance, so I knew that trying to re-engage him would not be easy. He did not respond to any of my communications.

However, Kristyan also has another business that he co-runs, together with David Power, called PS Composites (2017), and it is David Power that brought Stuart Bray up from Pinewood Studios to University Centre Somerset. David was promoting PS Composites and the materials they sell, and Stuart Bray used the materials in his demonstration. David and Kristyan represent the same interests and companies. Therefore, this could be interpreted as a response from Kristyan in some respects. This was a combined event that both of them offered for free for our students and us.

David was also generous enough to give the staff team several hundreds of pounds worth of a range of the latest materials to experiment with. He also noticed that we have no silicone de-gassing machine in our studios. This is an expensive vacuum unit that removes air bubbles from silicone as it is moulded. David also offered to send us one of his degassing units that they have replaced, on the basis that he is lending it to us until we have our own. We have made

numerous unsuccessful attempts to obtain one of these through capital bids over the last six years, so to be offered access to one in this way is a fantastic development for us.

I asked David about trainee posts at KMFX and he informed me that they were taking a break from their trainee programme this year. He explained that Kristyan is too busy to run it at the moment, so they are focusing on multiple current projects at this time and may restart their trainee programme in the near future. He promised to let me know when this programme restarts.

Barry Gower

Barry is the Prosthetic Make-up Supervisor on Game of Thrones. I was informed that until the filming of this show finishes, Barry is unavailable. I know several people that work for Barry who have said that they think it likely that he will engage with us when Game of Thrones reaches its completion, but that at the present time he would be too busy, so we will attempt to contact him again in the future.

Apart from the artists listed above, I contacted a large number of Make-up FX companies in the UK. Not many responded to emails and often phone numbers were directed through to administration employees who took my details, but very few artists returned the calls. Although I did get through to several companies and artists, most of them responded to say that they do not take students on work placements. They cited two main reasons for this. Firstly, their insurance did not cover them for this so they could not legally participate in this type of student work experience scheme. The second reason was the inconsistent nature of the industry itself. Often a job comes up and the workload is very intense until a project is completed. During this time, the industry professionals feel it would not work to have placement students because they would be too busy to make support arrangements for students. One company's representative said that the work often arises out of a phone call without prior warning when this may occur. This method of gaining work means they do not have the level of structured time to apply the rigidity of an educational institution's curriculum to how they work.

Companies such as Merlin Entertainment, who run Madame Tussaud's amongst many other ventures, were very helpful. I was put in touch with the team leader who was in charge of work placements in the London franchise. He turned out to be an ex -student of the course whom I know very well. He informed me that they accept applications for student work placements each year when they announce them, and that he would gather some information for me about this. I am meeting him in London later in the year to discuss this further and to interview him for the Artchive.

I also spoke to the manager of Artem (2017). Artem run a student work placement scheme with selected London Universities. After a number of phone calls, we established that our students' skillset was rarely needed at Artem. Their focus is on set building, prop making and visual effects. They occasionally get jobs that require Make-up FX but rarely take them since large companies, such as KMFX, have been established to cater for this niche industry specialism. They agreed to contact me in the future if they secure a contract that requires our students' skillset.

Reflecting on the developments that have been initiated by this project, it would appear that several important lessons can be learnt. Our engagement with industry is dependant on nurturing the contacts that we have and the professionals that were approached

engaged with us most effectively when they committed to working with our students. The most consequential results came from their involvement with the programmes we run. Inviting professionals to visit and work with the students has led to graduate progression opportunities and potentially to student work placements in the next academic year.

The existing connections between the industry and the Media Make-up team have been developed through our attendance at trade shows and on training courses. It seems that for us to build on this further we should increase our attendance at these types of events. There are three trade shows a year in the UK and we currently only attend one of these. It would be far better for us to attend them all. With this in mind, we are planning a student trip in November to the Prosthetics Event in Birmingham. We hope this will consolidate existing relations and generate new ones. Training for staff with industry professionals on short courses has also increased our professional contacts, profiling and skillset, and this would be a worthwhile addition to the staff development programme in the next academic year. The resulting contacts and industry links are invaluable to the future of the course and raising its profile amongst potential students and in the industry itself.

The project has yielded some very positive results that have had a beneficial impact on our profile. Our reputation for industry engagement is second to none at this time. Work placement opportunities now exist and can be developed in the next academic year, subject to curriculum planning and the success of student applications for such placements.

The Artchive has several interviews still to be filmed in the near future, which will be edited and uploaded to YouTube in collaboration with the marketing department at University Centre Somerset. Discussions about this have taken place with Liz Porter, the Marketing Officer, and once the videos are ready to upload, they will be sent to Matt Rowntree, the HE Marketing Manager, to be uploaded to the institution's channel. They will also be posted onto the VLE for students to access as a learning resource.

Our successes this year have cemented our reputation as a leader in industry engagement in Make-up FX and this relates directly to the initial intent of this project.

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GARY MILLS
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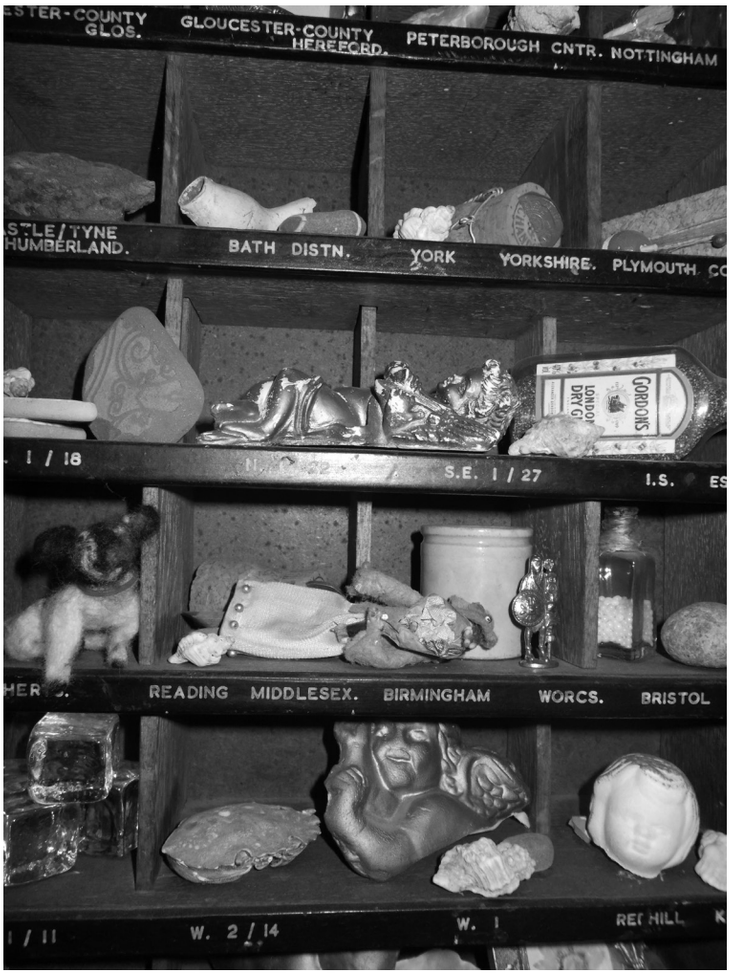
Programme Leader BA (Hons) Design Fashion,
BA (Hons) Textile and Surface Design

What can be identified as being 'created', compared to that which is 'designed'?

Through the Bridgwater & Taunton College Research and Scholarly Activity Award Holder Scheme, I have explored the identity of a body of creative work that has been Designed, opposed to what is identified as being Created by a Fine Artist.

This research stems from conversations and communications related to the Open University validation of the BA (Hons) Fine Art Programme, which I am closely involved in as a Higher Education enhancement practitioner. The concept I wished to explore and challenge was the possible perception that Fine Artists and Designers approach creative work using very different and yet



Identity 'Assemblages Cabinet'

recognised methodologies. Therefore, the aim of the research was to explore the genre of artefacts, which are considered to be fine art in identity and have been investigated using comparisons between the differences and similarities to design methodologies.

To explore this in context I have produced a body of creative works for exhibition, titled 'Identity' using my design methodologies, which the viewer could possibly identify as Fine Art rather than a designed product.

Research Methodology

Primary research involved visiting contemporary art exhibitions to view art works and reflect upon the outcomes and collected qualitative data through interviews with the artists to establish their own methodologies to creative works. For example, the creative work by local artist Jenny Graham and her work titled 'Assemblages' have influenced my own approach to design work.

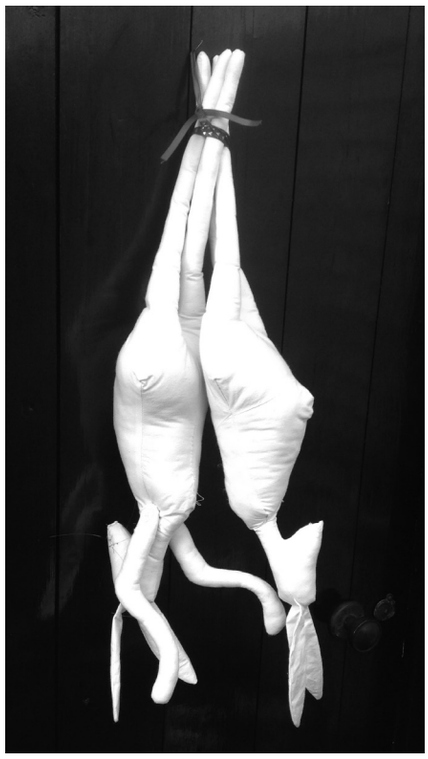
I have been able to discuss my research with an academic colleague, Molly Rooke, who is practising in the field of Fine Art, and analyse her own view point on the differences between Design and creating artefacts through a Fine Art practice.

Through a supported experiment, I have explored further a cross-disciplinary approach and practice towards teaching and learning at undergraduate level within the specialist subjects of textiles, surface design, fashion design, graphic and media communication and fine art.

Supported Experiments

Secondary research has involved a short literature review of text from *How Designers Think* (Lawson, 1997), which discusses and considers the methodologies and working practices of the designer. Academic researcher Bryan Lawson states:

> In fact, probably all the experts have something to contribute in designing a solution. The danger is that each may conditioned by their education and the design technology they understand. Design situations vary not just because the problems are dissimilar, but also because designers habitually adopt different approaches (1997, p. 9).



Identity 'Left at the door'

I have further explored a selection of creative works and practitioners, such as textile artist Mister Finch, who creates three-dimensional textile outcomes to entertain his audience with playful humanistic creatures presented in class cabinets. Using the online pin-board Pinterest, I have identified images that I would consider recognisable within a Fashion & Textile design genre, although their creators identify as being 'artists'.

The Application

Through identified design methodologies, practice and processes, I have created a collection of two and three dimensional outcomes to be viewed within the context of an art exhibition.

Identity 'Place'

The design processes I have explored have been recorded in a reflective journal and sketch book, with a critical narrative that discusses the identity of these creative methods and the thought processes applied.

Design Practice

The overall aim of this scholarly activity has been to develop and improve my knowledge and understanding of the differences and similarities between approaches to creative works and outcomes. I am currently working on cross-disciplinary group and one- to-one tutorials

with some measured positive responses from the undergraduates and academic team. The research and its findings are beginning to inform further approaches and generate ideas to develop a better understanding of methodologies within the creative arts.

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JOHN BAGLOW
Lecturer
Land-Based, Business and Sports Area

Do you suffer from techno-angst?

Weller (2011, p.168) points out that attitudes to using technology in teaching and learning range from scepticism and resistance to a kind of "technology fetishism lacking in critical reflection". He agrees with Lanier (2010, cited in Weller, 2011, p. 168) that "technology criticism shouldn't be left to luddites" but makes the equally valid point that engagement with technology should not be the preserve of evangelists.

As an Initial Teacher Education (ITE) tutor, it is not my job to tell people how to teach, nor do I intend to do that here. Within the limits of this paper, I hope to draw attention to just a few aspects of the learning process and suggest reasons for exploring how digital technology could make a positive contribution to that learning process.

I have made some points about how students learn, and the nature and needs of those students.

My research project involves looking at the potential for delivering some parts of the ITE curriculum, making increased use of that technology, combined with exploring whether social media offer any benefits for improving interaction between tutor and students, and between students, when they are not in class.

1. Choose your pedagogy

There is no point in using technology, however excitingly innovative or impressive it is, unless it improves the learning process. To make that judgement we need to have some idea how learning happens so that we can develop our pedagogy. It is outside the scope of this paper to explore in detail what learning is and how it is best achieved (join one of our ITE classes if you want to find out about the latest thinking!) but for the purposes of justifying the current research project I shall use Laurillard's (2008, p.5) summary as my starting-point:

> There is a common thread running through the writings of the great educators, not always shared by learning theorists from behaviourist psychology, cognitive psychology, and cognitive science ….that learning is active. Therefore, the role of the teacher is not to transmit knowledge to a passive recipient, but to structure the learner's engagement with the knowledge, practising the high-level cognitive skills that enable them to make that knowledge their own.

She makes the point that some theorists argue that the learner is an empty vessel to be filled up by the teacher (and there are sound arguments that such learning can sometimes be appropriate) but

that many theorists and practitioners believe that the learner should engage actively with the learning process. Säljö (1979) raises the same alternatives when he asks whether learning is more to do with acquiring knowledge or understanding reality.

Learning theories overlap and some, which seem to be based on conflicting principles, nevertheless have common threads. Siemens (2014) argues that technology makes it possible for learners to communicate with each other and to access information far more than has historically been possible. Learning theories are all about the process of learning rather than its content. He suggests that the constructivist principles, which state that learners create knowledge as they attempt to understand their experiences, can best be supported by what he calls connectivism. The link between contructivist and connectivist principles is clear from Siemens' (2014) rationale for seeing technology-aided learning as essentially an exercise in connectivity. His ideas can be summarised as:

- learning and knowledge arise from diversity of opinion
- the capacity to know is more critical than what is currently known
- the ability to see connections between ideas and concepts is a core skill
- currency (i.e. accurate, up-to-date knowledge) is the aim of all connective learning activities
- decision-making itself is a learning process
- As Sfard (1998) also argues, learners are members of a community and learning a subject is seen as a process of becoming a member of a certain community. She sees no place for the stand-alone learner.

As teacher-educators and as teachers we need constantly to reflect on and evaluate the learning process, and we may interpret the evidence according to our particular working context. Siemens' (2014) case for a connectivist approach is worth serious consideration. We should consider whether we can use technology to enhance students' learning by enabling them to plug into sources of information and means of communication.

As the Schools Standards Minister Neil Gibb (2017) suggested recently, there is still plenty of scope for debating how relatively active or passive the learner and the tutor should ideally be, but there is certainly a strong body of opinion which believes that active learner engagement with the learning process is the route to effective learning. Our research project is exploring if there are ways that digital technology can make a positive contribution to that learning process. I agree with Laurillard (2008) that technology does not change what needs to be learned but may well change how that learning is achieved. Our project has experimented with different ways of facilitating learning.

2. How do you meet your learners' needs?

When establishing our preferred pedagogy we need to be aware of the diverse nature of our student body. This is equally important whatever mode of delivery we choose.

Based on Richardson's (2006, p. 676) framework, Fig. 1 attempts to explore the varied back stories of a group of ITE students. If our learners are as diverse in their backgrounds, characteristics, and approaches to study as this figure suggests, it seems likely that no

single approach will meet their very diverse needs by itself, whether that approach is making limited or more extensive use of technology's mobile and online potential. How they learn will need to take account of all the other factors.

Contextual Factors

- Some in full-time work with a time teaching
- Some in full-teaching element
- Mix of voluntary and compulsory attendees
- Mix of motives
- Frustration at restrictions on how they teach
- Conflicting pressures on teachers (e.g. pass rates vs retention)

Demographic Characteristics

- Wide age-range
- Some already teaching
- Some digital natives and millennials
- Some not confident with ICT
- Some use digital technology heavily in their personal life

Conceptions of Learning

- Some students see teaching as just a practical activity
- For some, abstraction and interpretation are the goal
- Some want a magic formula
- Learning as the acquisition of facts or procedures would be a good summary of most students' approach

Perceptions of Academic Context

- The course involves a practice element
- Some students anxious about the perceived academic nature of the course

Approaches to Studying

- Some are autonomous learners
- Some are reflective learners
- Some learners not used to self-directed learning
- Large variation in use of technology
- Most have no experience of on-line learning
- Some recently returned to learning

Fig. 1 Diversity of student backgrounds and motivation

Should we take account of Matheos *et al*.'s (2005) five categories of student learning preferences? According to their research, learners may incline towards being "independent, collaborative, technology-centred, instructor-centred or flexible". These categories may not correspond exactly to students in Further Education, but they do serve as a reminder that a variety of approaches may be needed to meet our students' needs.

Can we conceive of ways that technology could make a useful contribution to meeting the needs of students with some of these five characteristics? Does technology, if carefully chosen, motivate some age-groups particularly well? Some students may find that accessing materials and activities when and where it suits them can enable them to overcome disabilities that would be a barrier in the classroom. For example, a dyslexic student can read at their own speed, revisit problematic sections, enlarge the font and choose a helpful background colour if working online. It may well be that a

blended approach, combining classroom and online learning, can be a way of catering for some students' learning preferences.

Laurillard (2008) poses the question of how technology can help learners and teachers jointly to reach a positive outcome by negotiation. Is there a possible tension between students' existing learning preferences and the ways of learning seen as more desirable by the tutor? Would the learners, or at least some of them, welcome the opportunity to use more technology in their learning? Or could it be that the teacher is using technology more than the learners are comfortable with? These are questions we need to answer if we are to arrive at a pedagogy which meets the needs of our learners.

3. The research project

Delivering curriculum online

The project has explored the potential for delivering small sections of the ITE programme in the Bridgwater Campus using a combination of the VLE Blackboard and online tutorials. It was clear from the outset that the priority would be to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning process and to draw practical conclusions about how best to use the technology. We would finally make recommendations about pedagogy and suggestions for a possible protocol for using online technology.

Preliminary findings: we have developed two curriculum items, for Year 1 and Year 2 ITE classes. These are being delivered in three different modes:

- students worked out of class and individually and submitted work to the VLE (Blackboard in our case)
- students worked in class, with their tutor present, collaboratively, and submitted work to the VLE
- students worked out of class, collaboratively, and submitted work using both slides with presenter's notes and text to the VLE.

Although collaborative working has some very significant benefits for the learning process, its inclusion in these activities proved to be a complicating factor for many students. There are good constructivist grounds for arguing that collaboration should be part of the online learning process, as it is an effective strategy for achieving the kind of connected learning suggested by Sfard (1998). On reflection, the need for students to feel confident accessing materials and carrying out learning activities, which required them to work independently and at the same time to feel at home with the VLE technology, was enough of a challenge without asking them to work collaboratively as well.

Students were given the opportunity to attend virtual sessions to support their use of the VLE. Where participation was made optional there was limited take-up of the offer to meet in the virtual classroom. This may be because students did not feel the need for more interaction or support, or because they felt it was an extra demand on their time that they felt unwilling to respond to. Alternatively, it may be that we were over-optimistic, thinking that simply offering online sessions without spending time in advance exploring its benefits would result in an enthusiastic response.

One of the Year 2 groups did take part en masse in an online discussion with me whilst they were in class with their regular tutor! The main point of that activity was that it gave the students, who after all are trainee teachers, some insight into the potential of this mode of interacting with students.

The Year 1 group were told that they were expected to attend a virtual session timed to coincide with the time they would have attended their regular classroom session. We are still collecting feedback from the students and their tutor, but we were pleased that 10 students attended the session simultaneously, which was satisfying from the point of view of getting the technology to work. The session would have been more effective if we had given them a clearer idea of what was expected of them.

By utilising the virtual classroom, we are building up a view on the most effective mode for using the conferencing technology. We are looking at the different configurations of software (e.g. mobile apps) and hardware (microphones), and also working towards developing best practice for online sessions. This includes issues such as whether online sessions should be made compulsory and whether courses with substantial theory or knowledge content lend themselves well to online delivery.

Using Social Media for out-of-class communication

A secondary focus has been the evaluation of ways of increasing and improving interaction between ITE students and interactions between them and their tutor out of class via social media. This involved the creation of a closed Facebook group. There is a debate in Bridgwater & Taunton College and in the wider educational context about the relative merits of keeping all contact between tutor and students, and perhaps even between students, within the relatively safe and regimented confines of a VLE. My research was based simply on a closed Facebook page set up by students on an ITE programme, with a view to evaluating what contribution it made to the exchange of information and opinion between students and the tutor. We were guided by the college's E-safety Policy and Procedure (2017) and by anecdotal information about how other programmes are using social media. This is clearly an area which would merit further study. There are sound arguments for how their use can play a part in the constructivist pedagogy, with its emphasis on interaction and on students working as a group or community. Equally there are concerns about the demands such activities make on tutor time and to what extent the tutor remains responsible for what information is passed on using the Facebook group. If, for example, a student posts incorrect information about a deadline, to what extent is the tutor responsible for correcting the information?

Some classes, not included in our research, use a closed Facebook group where the tutor very much dictates the content. Is a teacher-led format the most appropriate, or should the students also play a prominent role? Atkinson *et al*. (2009, p.18) neatly summarise the quandary: "the challenge is to find the happy medium, walled garden versus filtered cell".

Concluding points

I have explored very selectively some of the prevailing ideas about how learning can most effectively be achieved. You may well not agree that they are valid and you may have developed your own pedagogy which is based on different principles. Whichever is the case, you will need to evaluate the potential role of technology in meeting the aims of your pedagogy. Additionally, it may well be productive for you to consider how technology might extend the accessibility of your programmes and offer potential for accommodating different learning preferences.

Given that I am a teacher-educator and that my students are learning to be effective teachers, I shall finish by suggesting that exposing them to the different modes of delivery offered by online technology is an opportunity for vicarious learning. In other words, regardless of the conclusions we and they may have reached following this modest research project, the students will have had the opportunity to experience the technology at first hand and so can draw their own conclusions about its potential for their own students.

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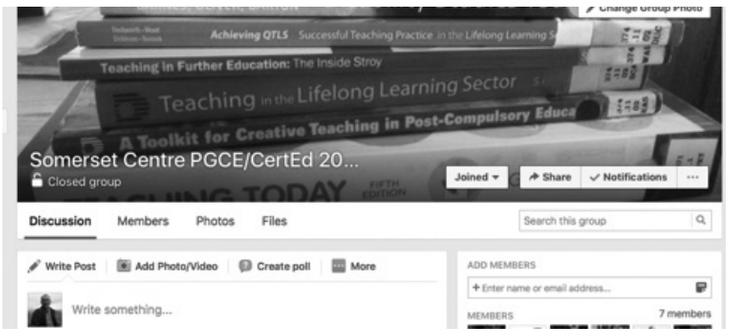
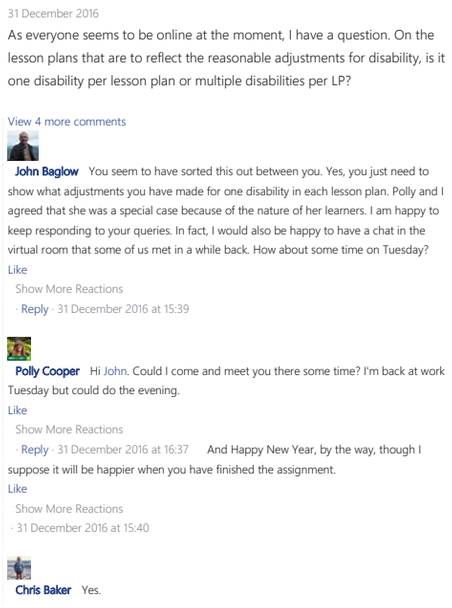


Fig. 2: This is the front page of the closed Facebook page we have been using.



31 December 2016

As everyone seems to be online at the moment, I have a question. On the lesson plans that are to reflect the reasonable adjustments for disability, is it one disability per lesson plan or multiple disabilities per LP?

View 4 more comments

John Baglow You seem to have sorted this out between you. Yes, you just need to show what adjustments you have made for one disability in each lesson plan. Polly and I agreed that she was a special case because of the nature of her learners. I am happy to keep responding to your queries. In fact, I would also be happy to have a chat in the virtual room that some of us met in a while back. How about some time on Tuesday?

Like

Show More Reactions

· Reply · 31 December 2016 at 15:39

Polly Cooper Hi John. Could I come and meet you there some time? I'm back at work Tuesday but could do the evening.

Like

Show More Reactions

· Reply · 31 December 2016 at 16:37 And Happy New Year, by the way, though I suppose it will be happier when you have finished the assignment.

Like

Show More Reactions

· 31 December 2016 at 15:40

Chris Baker Yes.

Fig. 3: This is an extract from our Facebook page which gives you some idea of the nature of the interactions which take place.

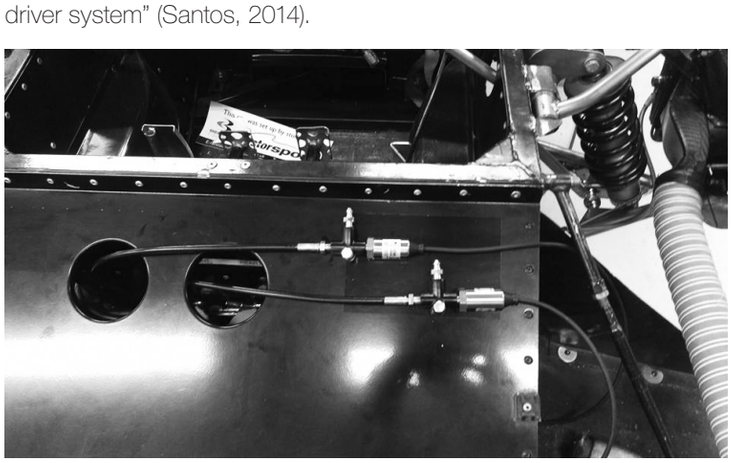
Fig. 4: An extract from Blackboard showing some of the materials, activities and links used for a unit which required the students to carry out an action research activity. They had access to e-books, they could link to the virtual classroom for interactive sessions, and all work was submitted and marked online, with speedy feedback.

JOSH SMITH
Enhancement Practitioner
Course Leader in Motorsport Engineering (HE)

The enhancement of data acquisition and analysis for use in motorsport engineering

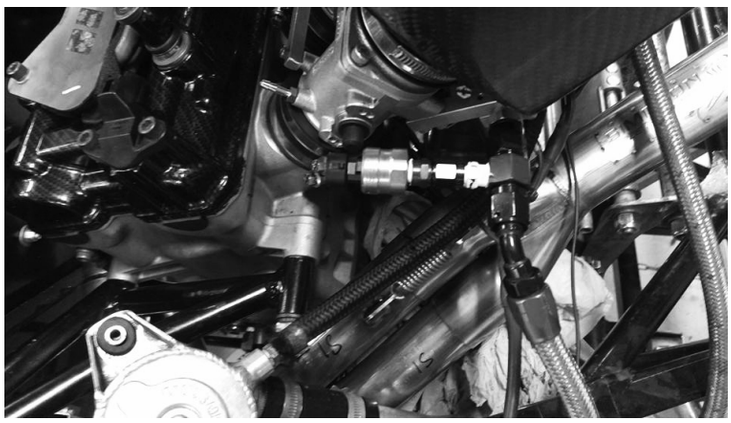
As a vocational based lecturer I have a high need to ensure that theory lessons also include an element of practical or hands-on work from the learners. This improves engagement, interaction and knowledge/understanding. A large portion of the cohort are kinaesthetic learners that are required to undertake a significant portion of their learning in a classroom environment, so bringing the practical element to the classroom is a must to help them develop and learn to the best of their ability.

Collectively the teaching team identified a need to improve the methods of teaching modules based around Data Logging and Acquisition. This module runs across a range of programmes and levels both as an individual module and also embedded within others. Its topics are covered from Level 2 in the Extended Diploma all the way up to our Level 6 Motorsport Technology (Top Up). Data logging is an essential tool that "provides the engineers with the information they need in order to improve the performance of the race vehicle/ driver system" (Santos, 2014).



The brake pressure sensors installed

Currently we use data samples and traces that have been provided by other race teams and the data sets supplied by the software providers. This data is often from unknown or unfamiliar cars, events and circuits. For the students this has limited value and meaning as the conventional process of analysing data comes from being at a race circuit with the specific vehicle. Imagine marking a piece of student work that shows a graph with no title, axes titles, units or key! Initially in this module type the core theory is delivered in a demonstration and lecture type style moving to active, problem-



The fuel pressure sensor

based and student-led learning. The former styles have the given benefit of developing “transferable & employability skills, team working” whilst providing “real-world experience” (Leicester Learning Institute, 2017).

To make the sessions more valuable to the students and to give them a more industry themed experience, we needed to be able to produce our own data sets from the college race car that the students prepare, maintain and engineer throughout the year both at the college and when at the trackside.

The methodology was to use our current college race car, a Radical PR6. This competes at circuits across the country and is a student-led race team. The parts required were a multitude of sensors and associated fitting hardware. Guidance for this came from industry experts at Faringdon Instruments and Speedflow. Once the College’s Research and Scholarly Activity funding bid was approved, the purchase of components could be carried out. They were then fitted to the vehicle and calibrated during practical sessions with the learners. Our first event took place at Silverstone at the end of May to test the system and start data collection, which could then be gathered over the summer and implemented into teaching sessions at the start of the new academic year.

The cars in the workshop

The outcomes achieved so far are that the design of the system and parts list have been created; the parts have then been accumulated and the systems have now been installed on the car and calibrated to ensure that the right values are being read and work correctly.

The outcomes to be achieved over the summer and first term of 2017/18 include carrying out the on-track test to ensure correct operation of sensors and collation of a range of data, as the first test session revealed some running faults with the system which

need further investigation in the workshop. Finally, the data will be implemented into a classroom session to gauge feedback compared with previous experiences of similar sessions that used supplied data sets.

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Jack Carolan – Bridgwater & Taunton College – Student - Mechanical installation, electrical installation and assistance with calibration and set up.

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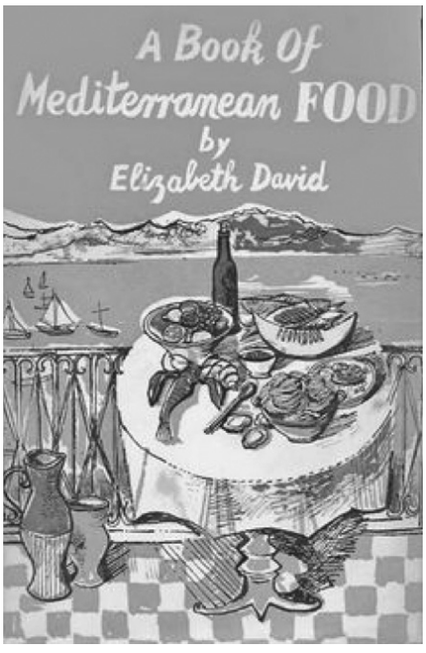
LORNA SHEPPARD
Lecturer
Art & Design
Programme leader BA (Hons) Graphic Media
and Communication

A Mediterranean Odyssey: text and illustration and the discourse of foreign travel in Elizabeth David's *A Book of Mediterranean Food* (1950)



The cover of Elizabeth David's book (1950)

I have been undertaking part-time PhD study at Falmouth University since October 2013. My research focuses on British illustrated cookbooks from 1954 (the year when food rationing ended) until 1965. Following the successful completion of my literature review in September 2016 (assessed by academic staff at the University of the Arts London), which allows me to continue to the final stages of my PhD study, I made the decision to defer my study until October 2017. As a result of this completed review, my new research title is: *A Study of Illustrated Post-War British Cookbooks: The Interplay Between Author and Illustrator and Class and Gender Identities* (1954 - 1965).

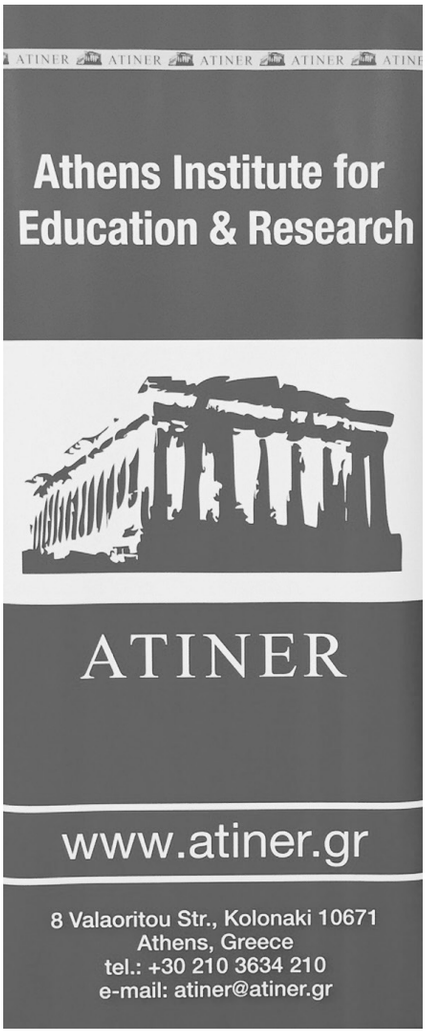
This decision has allowed me to concentrate on my own practice as a freelance illustrator and to continue to focus upon my role as Course Leader for the Graphic, Media and Communication programme and as Level 6 Visual Culture Lecturer within the faculty of Art, Media and Design.

In the interim period I have continued to attend conferences to raise my research profile. So far this year, I have participated in conferences at the University of London and later this year I will attend events at the Institute for Historical Studies. In September 2016, I was delighted to have a paper selected for presentation at the Athens Institute for Education and Research (ATINER) conference on Mediterranean Studies that took place in April 2017 in Athens, Greece.

The conference's Mediterranean focus brought together academics from over 20 countries including Iraq, Libya and New Zealand with papers as diverse as *Gender and Myth in Greek Tragedy and Contemporary Cinema* and *Athletic Nudity and Dress in Greek Athletics*.

My paper focused on Elizabeth David's generously illustrated cookbook *A Book of Mediterranean Food* (1950), which is based on a collection of recipes made by the author when she lived in Egypt, France, Italy and the Greek Islands. I discussed the discourse between text and illustration, how Mediterranean recipes captured the essence of this beautiful region and how the lavishly titled recipes gave the book its sophisticated and cultivated appeal. With an emphasis on authenticity and historical accuracy, the book explores the many new possibilities of continental cooking in a period where Britain was experiencing post-war reconstruction.

Elizabeth David's post-war cookbooks typically appealed to the middle-class reader, evoking memories of and aspirations to foreign travel, and illustration was instrumental in promoting the touristic



Conference banner

experience. During a period of post-war austerity in Britain, David's book was seen as a welcome return to stability and, despite the limitations of the English larder, the book was instrumental in introducing the public to culinary daring, adventure and travel narratives. David would later describe the book 'as a love letter to the Mediterranean' (cited in Cooper 1999, p. 153) and through David's evocative writing and John Minton's accompanying illustrations, a cultural and historical link is made to the original source of her recipes. Heralding a turning point towards a new sense of modernity, her books also challenged traditional roles by empowering and educating its readers. The informative and instructional element of her cookbooks therefore places this book as a pedagogical device where both the sophisticated and the everyday cook is able to feel suitably equipped for any occasion. As one reader would later describe *A Book of Mediterranean Food*, 'although I really have read an enormous number of books which have purported to touch on this kind of cuisine, they have all failed to give me a clear picture of the more exotic recipes. You have definitely filled in this gap, and I am very grateful' (Darch, 1950, cited in Cooper 2000, p. 153).

The post-war years also gave rise to new opportunities and developing technologies and, in order to maximise their own potential, illustrators had to think more creatively and laterally, like the readers of their illustrated books. David's ability to take an everyday vegetable and turn it into an exotic fancy draws similarities to styles adopted by many of her books' illustrators, and John Minton's evocative images perfectly capture the culture, history and landscapes of the Mediterranean through his bright tapestry of colours.

The convergence of my roles as both lecturer and practicing illustrator have enabled me to analyse literature and works of art with a better understanding of visual methodologies and the semiotic nature of books and their accompanying illustrations. Visual rhetoric and content analysis will explain how the readers of David's cookbooks responded to text and illustration. This analysis of the consumer reading a cookbook draws on a variety of theories from the function of image and text to the conversations that take place at the table. The deconstruction of an illustration requires knowledge and an understanding of notions of semiotics (the illustration as a sign or symbol of the text) and, given the adoption of traditional illustrative methods as opposed to photography, further research into this subject is required. Print culture has a defining influence on the methods I have employed; and the development of printing and - in the case of images - photography, had a profound effect on the development of the cookbook, with publishers moving toward photographic print processes. David's use of illustration rather than photography in her books emphasised the illustrator's ability to capture a nuance without disturbing the original intended nature of the accompanying text.

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MARK FEARBUNCE
Course Leader
Creative Arts

How far, and with what consequences, does 'Art from Elsewhere' speak its own voice?

Abstract of my research project

In the autumn of 2016 I completed my MA in Art History with the Open University with distinction. My dissertation was entitled *How far, and with what consequences, does 'Art from Elsewhere' speak its own voice?* I focussed on an exhibition presented jointly by Bristol Museum & Art Gallery and Arnolfini that I visited before conducting further research using the University of the West of England's (UWE) library at Bower Ashton, as well as online databases of scholarly articles. The dissertation involved an investigation into how art is produced, exhibited and viewed.

In recent years there has been a rise in the visibility of international contemporary fine art practice in the West. Galleries are turning their attention to contemporary art from Asia, Africa and South America, seemingly giving contemporary art a global voice rather than one dominated by European or North American practice. Focussing on *Art from Elsewhere*, a 2016 exhibition of contemporary international art in Bristol, this dissertation examines the work of three Pakistani artists: Imran Qureshi, Bani Abidi and Shahzia Sikander.

The aim of the dissertation is to establish the extent to which these artists are conditioned by Western approaches to art production and consumption and the consequences this has for international contemporary art practice and theory. Each chapter of the dissertation examines the impact that particular groups have on how the art is produced the way it is: the artists, the exhibitors and the viewers of the work. Through the course of the dissertation, the significance of each group's role as an observer becomes clear. While the production, display and consumption of the art is intended to promote fine art and identities beyond the West, they in fact serve to reinforce the Western dominance on international contemporary fine art practice.

Key points learnt that might be applicable to others

Examining the workings of my own subject, it was fascinating to discover why certain practices are undertaken the way they are. This has historical, institutional, cultural and individual significance and impact. My research illuminated the inherent global inequalities and biases within practical and theoretical applications of art. I would encourage others to consider how their curriculum area is formed

and where there may be biases in accepted practice that impact on gender, racial, national or other identities. There are often positive efforts to highlight and challenge past inequalities. The act of doing so, however, can expose the structural biases that were built on a white middle class heterosexual male 'norm', where all other identities are still measured against this 'norm'; an exception that proves the rule, if you like.

All curriculum subjects, whether they are arts, humanities, science or technology, undergo specific processes of learning and methods of conducting practice. In a (hopefully) more international and inclusive world, these processes and methods need to be examined to ensure they do not favour any particular identity or promote a version of the subject that excludes other versions. A radical overhaul of these practices within Bridgwater & Taunton College, even if this seems incompatible with the industry beyond education, may help to shape that industry for the better in the future.

Impact on teaching and learning

In discussions and theory sessions, some of these ideas have been investigated. In practical activities the scope of acceptable practice has been challenged and broadened. Whereas modern and contemporary fine art practice allows for a variety of approaches and media, from a full cohort of international influences, its default is a Western art form. For example, Picasso may have been inspired by African masks, but his work took the form of sculpture or painting whose function and value descended from a European tradition. The masks themselves and their particular function in ritual remained outside 'art'. Although performance, installation, ephemeral and site-specific art practices are challenging accepted forms of practice, fine art is still separate from other forms of cultural production in terms of aesthetic value and purpose. By presenting itself as including all practices, the specific (Western) limits of contemporary fine art practice are not seen. To challenge this, students are being encouraged not only to seek out media and approaches to art that are influenced by other forms of cultural production, but to also incorporate the values and functions of those practices. It is worth mentioning the additional complication, that the need to create something new, something different to drive art forwards, is also tied up with Western values. So this encouragement of students to challenge art's values is itself reinforcing a key value in Western art! Despite this, there is much value in encouraging students to see the world from other perspectives. The way in which non-Western art practices are investigated has begun to shift from 'other than the norm' to 'another norm'. There are, alas, exam board restrictions on true inclusivity as the values of a narrower understanding of the subject still dominate. Exam boards, it seems, are of that group who, despite making positive efforts to increase equality, are structurally bound in an inherently unequal system. This will be a slow evolution rather than a revolution!

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Images from 'Art from Elsewhere' exhibition are listed below.

1. Bani Abidi, *Shan Pipe Band Learns the Star-Spangled Banner*, 2004, video, 7 mins 31 secs, Bristol Museum & Art Gallery, Bristol. Photo: Mark Fearbunce, 2016.
2. Shahzia Sikander, *Encapsulated Confrontation*, 2011, gouache, wash, pencil and ink on wasabi paper, 229x152cm, Bristol Museum & Art Gallery, Bristol. Photo: Mark Fearbunce, 2016.
3. Imran Qureshi, *This Leprous Brightness*, 2010, nine gouaches on wasli paper, each 29.5x21cm, Arnolfini, Bristol. Photo: Mark Fearbunce, 2016.
4. Installation view of *Art from Elsewhere* at Bristol Museum & Art Gallery, showing:

   left: Shahzia Sikander, *Encapsulated Confrontation*, 2011, gouache, wash, pencil and ink on wasabi paper, 229x152cm.

   centre: Ai Weiwei, *A Ton of Tea*, 2007, compressed pur er tea, 100x100x100cm.

   right wall: Robert Breer, 66, 1966, 16mm film and original index card drawings, variable duration and 93.5x74cm (framed).

   Photo: Mark Fearbunce, 2016.

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The art of bibliotherapy

On Wednesday 26 April 2017, I attended a course on 'The Art of Bibliotherapy', which was run by the South Western Regional Library Service (SWRLS) at Taunton Library. The course was designed for the library staff from various sectors, including academic, health and public. It was led by Ella Berthoud who works as a bibliotherapist with 'The School of Life' (2017).

Ella studied English Literature at Cambridge University and later Fine Art at the University of East London, where she combined her two passions for reading and painting by listening to audiobooks while creating works of art. She has worked in the field of bibliotherapy for several years, describing it as 'the art of prescribing fiction to cure life's ills' (Berthoud, 2017a).

Bibliotherapy entails using books as a tool or material for the treatment of mental or psychological disorders and to help solve or effectively cope with personal problems. Bibliotherapy is more of an art than a science. It is the art of prescribing the right book to the right person at the right time. Some people prefer to use a self-help method like reading books rather than medication.

Bibliotherapy is used for people of all ages, children, adults and older people. This helps them to deal with a wide range of emotional, social, psychological and physical issues such as:

- Physical health problems
- Disabilities / learning disabilities
- Mental health problems
- Stress
- Isolation
- Addictive behaviour
- Eating disorders
- Family problems
- Grief and bereavement
- Abuse
- Anxiety
- Life changes
- Anger issues
- Depression
- Bullying
- Trauma
- Low self-esteem

The concept of bibliotherapy goes back to ancient Greece. Aristotle considered literature to have healing benefits and that reading a book was a way to treat illness. An early reference to the therapeutic value of libraries is quoted on a sign over the entrance to the ancient Greek library of Thebes: 'the healing place of the soul' (Forrest, 1998, p.1). However, as physical books and libraries were not always readily available, theatres were often used as their equivalent. Theatres would be built next to hospitals and the patients would be sent there to experience catharsis in order to aid the healing process. The town

The Art of Bibliotherapy course at Taunton Library

Maryam Abolghassemi and Ella Berthoud, the course leader for the Art of Bibliotherapy

Maryam Abolghassemi at the Art of Bibliotherapy course in April 2017

of Epidaurus was considered a place of healing; the ancient Theatre of Epidaurus was built adjacent to the Sanctuary of Asclepius (the god of healing) as a place of entertainment for the sanctuary patients.

The earliest definition of bibliotherapy is in *Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary* in 1941 (cited by Cornett and Cornett, 1980). Bibliotherapy is here described as 'the employment of books and the reading of them in the treatment of nervous disease', and as such is apparently recognised as a genuine way to treat diseases.

The Haunted Bookshop by Christopher Morley (1919) contains one of the first recorded usages of the term 'bibliotherapy'. The story is about the owner of a bookshop, Mr. Mifflin, who describes himself as a bibliotherapist: 'My pleasure is to prescribe books for such patients as drop in here and are willing to tell me their symptoms' (Anderson, 2015).

Jane Austen's books were used as bibliotherapeutic materials, as she represented calm, peace and social order in her books. English doctors prescribed her books for soldiers back home during the Second World War and her books were very much used as recuperative aids.

More recently, Sharon Dunscombe set up an English bibliotherapy service 'Tales for Tea' to share poems and stories with groups in libraries, schools and community centres. This service is as much about the social aspect of getting together as the reading of books themselves (Dunscombe, 2017).

Another notable practitioner is Deborah Alma, a self-styled bibliotherapist working with poetry. Alma set up the 'Emergency Poet' service, in which she travelled around schools, libraries, festivals and other events in a 1970s ambulance. Alma has also edited a useful book for bibliotherapy, an anthology of poetry entitled *The Emergency Poet* (Alma, 2015), with poems intended to overcome stress, depression and other anxieties.

'The Reader Organisation', established in 2008 by Angela Macmillan and Jane Davis in Liverpool, started a movement to encourage reading. Initially a five week summer project in 2002, it has now become a national movement and is spreading all around the world. The Reader Organisation's aim was to promote reading to people who would not normally read, and who would not encounter texts like Shakespeare and Milton. They first used this method of shared reading in libraries and then in prisons, hospitals and hospices. There were immediate reactions from people attending these courses, such as 'this isn't just reading, this is good for my health, you should be getting paid by the NHS' (The Reader, 2017). People immediately recognised the beneficial powers of reading together and so the Reader Organisation was established to promote this in 2008.

'ReLit', the charity for literature and mental health, was created by authors Paula Byrne and Jonathan Bate, in Oxford as:

> The Foundation for Bibliotherapy: the complementary treatment of stress, anxiety and other conditions through slow reading. We believe that attentive immersion in great literature, especially poetry, can relieve, restore and reinvigorate the human mind (ReLit, 2017).

Jonathan Bate is Provost of Worcester College, Professor of English Literature at Oxford University and also an academic and Shakespeare scholar. Paula Byrne is an expert on Jane Austen and the founder and Chief Executive of ReLit. They are currently teaching bibliotherapy online from Reading University.

'The School of Life' was established by Alain de Botton in London in 2008 and has since established branches all around the world. This is another popular place offering a bibliotherapy service, and professional bibliotherapists offer individual sessions that may be booked in person, by skype or over the phone.

Ella Berthoud described how a session works as a bibliotherapist in 'The School of Life':

> She sends a questionnaire out to the client when they sign up for every session. The questionnaire asks questions about reading habits: what do you like to read?; where do you like to read?; why do you read?; how much do you read?; what are your favourite books? There are also questions about the client's life at the moment: are you single, married or divorced?; do you have children?
>
> On receipt of the client's answers to the questions, the bibliotherapist has a one-to-one meeting with the client which takes place in the School of Life, via Skype or over the phone. Each session takes about 45 minutes up to one hour. After this, the therapist sends a prescription for 6 books that the client will read in their own time over the course of a few weeks or months. The therapist is there to answer questions as and when they arise. A few weeks later, they follow up and see if the client would like to come for more sessions.
>
> People come for different issues, such as changes in their career, thinking about having children, retirement, bereavement and other common problems. They are hoping a therapist can give them a kind of catalyst through the book to help them change their direction.
>
> Ella believes that bibliotherapy is the art of prescribing the right book to the right person at the right time. As a bibliotherapist at the School Of Life, she tends to prescribe fiction, novels, short stories and poems, more than non-fiction. Novels can be read in so many different ways and people bring their own personalities to the novel that they are reading. Ella has a favourite quote saying 'The reader's response is not to the meaning of the text, it is the meaning of the text'. This means readers actually interpret a novel, short story or poem and in that interpretation they are creating the meaning of the text anew every time they read, so every response to any text is always an individual one (Berthoud, 2017b).

Since attending the course, I have disseminated the outcomes and ideas to the Learning Resources team at the Taunton Campus. We run a number of reading and literacy initiatives, such as the Book Club, Reading Ahead, Read & Succeed Blog and the Creative Writing competition. There is therefore scope for some of the ideas from the bibliotherapy course to be implemented here at the College to benefit students and staff.

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Exercising in the cold

In winter, training outside is just not appealing. It is cold and dark and being inside is always preferable, but is it really a better option? What actually happens to our bodies when we do exercise in the cold?

The human body is designed to survive no matter what the elements throw at us. It can cope with almost everything, but it does have an impact on training and the efficiency of such training.

When the human body gets cold, the heart rate slows and this results in less oxygen being sent to the muscles, which makes the body feel sluggish and less responsive to any exercise (Gass, Gass and Pitetti, 2002). We also have structural differences in our muscles. The muscle fibres themselves become less elastic and harder to contract, also resulting in the sluggish feeling. As a result, we are less flexible and it becomes generally harder to move (Quan, Mack and Schiff, 2014). So, if we are training, a warm up becomes even more important to raise the heart rate and start converting oxygen into useable energy. When running or cycling, the muscle fibres will be less responsive at first. There will be reduced blood flow, which will affect the ability of the fibres to contract, so do not try and do a hard session without a longer than normal warm up or a period of gentle exercise.

Exercising in the cold

Finally, the general lethargic feeling is real too. As it gets colder, our body tries to redistribute the blood to the vital organs through a process called *vaso shunting* (Diversi, Franks-Kardum and Climstein, 2016), hence the white fingers and toes when we get cold. These areas are simply not getting the full supply of blood they need. But more importantly, the supply of oxygen-rich blood to the brain is also reduced, which contributes to the lethargic feeling. It also affects our ability to make decisions, to think clearly – something we do need to be concerned about. As we get colder, we are less able to rationalise

thoughts and decisions and more likely to make bad decisions. This may go some way towards explaining the increase in simple accidents during colder weather – we are more likely to fall off our bike, if we are unable to respond to the different surface changes and conditions. We cannot process the information quickly enough.

This impacts on our training. For example, when swimming, it is vital to remember that cold water can kill. When entering cold water, the intercostal muscles of the chest contract, preventing us from breathing out. It is this that causes people to die (Tipton, 2003).

The cold should not be an excuse to stop training, though it feels like it. Train differently and respect the cold, warm up for longer and do not make big, important decisions, other than asking yourself if you really do need a new bike. We all know the answer to that.

Recovery

Overload

Open any quality sports magazine and there will be articles about training, about going faster and about going longer. The question is – what is the impact on the human body?

For the human body to get stronger, we have to overload the muscle fibres: the muscle fibres make up the muscle structure (Riley and Arapoff, 1997). For the muscle to contract, the fibres themselves need to contract, and how powerfully they contract depends on the number of them that are used and their individual strength. The bad news is that you cannot get more muscle fibres through training. You have been born with a specific number, so you need to use the ones you have effectively (Howe, Davidson and Sloboda, 1998).

The principle of overload is simple: to make the muscle fibres stronger, you need to get them to contract harder than they usually can. This will cause micro tears of the fibres themselves but, as they recover and heal, they get larger and become stronger (Futterman, 2014). Therefore, rest is as important as physical training, as this allows the muscle fibres to recover and to develop.

This should be influencing your training: either sessions are all maximum effort, or they are low intensity and recovery. However, putting this into practice is difficult. Swimming, for example, would require a mixture of very high effort swims, all at maximum effort, but either with longer recovery or until you are able to maintain stroke quality. This would then be followed by recovery swims. Not pleasant training, but effective.

Effective cycling will require periods of very high intensity riding, perhaps hill sprints or longer periods of very hard and fast riding. As this cannot be maintained for long, it will also require periods of slow / low intensity riding to allow recovery. The same applies to running sessions.

At first you may only be able to do short periods of such high intensity, but as your muscle fibres get stronger, you will be able to maintain the hard efforts for longer. It will also mean that when you come to race, you have the muscle strength to race hard for longer and produce new personal best results.

The secret to quick race times would be to cut out the medium effort training and ensure that all sessions have a purpose, either training and muscle strength or recovery, rather than taking a sneaky run or cycle, which would not allow effective recovery!

The full versions of these articles were published in the *Triathlon Plus* magazine (Sauter, 2016a and Sauter, 2016b).

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A plant in the wrong place: a catalyst to inspire students to create more commercially viable products

Summary of activities

The scholarly activity I undertook initially was inspired by a trip to the Contemporary Craft Fair in Bovey Tracey, a national exhibition and trade show, where national artists and designers showcase their new contemporary and cutting-edge high-end craft products.

Artists and designers exhibit and sell textiles, ceramics, jewellery and other types of creative works. This event also showcases new sustainable materials and contemporary experimental techniques in a festival-style event with a very contemporary 'upmarket' feel. I hoped this would inspire ideas for the College's Technical Demonstrator team to share with students and colleagues to increase the producing of high quality final products from the students' own design ideas.

I set a project for myself and the other Technical Demonstrators for us all to create products using the skills and tools of our individual workshops and then to exhibit and sell them at the 'Taunton Live' Arts Festival, with the aim of also promoting our HE Design courses. This would also be used to promote the Art and Design workshops, so that students could see the potential of the techniques we are teaching them in real terms.

I personally used five more scholarly activity days to create my own project, which was inspired by the view of weeds from outside my printroom workshop window! I used both of my printroom workshop areas and started creating monoprints, a traditional printmaking technique, and photographs to produce my sketchbook of ideas. My secondary research was mainly done on the Pinterest app, which I then uploaded to my own virtual boards so that students could also access the resources. You can easily search for 'Bridgwater & Taunton College – Print' on Pinterest. I find Pinterest an excellent 'visual' research tool. I then progressed the designs into a collection of screen prints, from which I created art prints and T- shirts.

Primary research – weeds

A selection of monoprint art prints

Screen printed T-shirts

Monoprint art prints

The impact on the teaching and learning

There has been another positive outcome as the students could see how so much work can be created in six days to a marketable standard, with the students having six weeks to do the same in their design modules. I presented my work to the HE Textiles and Surface Design students, along with supporting primary and secondary research in the form of a sketchbook, design development and final resolved products. These are the same objectives required of the HE Design students when they submit their work at the end of a project. This has hopefully inspired students to produce a higher volume of quality work than they have done in the past, as I completed the same amount of work in days rather than weeks.

These activities also helped the other Technical Demonstrators to be re-inspired in their own practice. They all created varied craft design products, using their own specialist workshop areas and techniques including 3D and wood, digital design and laser cutting, and fashion manufacture. We all created a similar broad range of products, which we saw at the contemporary craft festival. We then personally sold them at 'Taunton Live' and in various other venues. At the same time on the stands we were promoting the Art and Design courses and the Arts House refurbishment at Bridgwater & Taunton College. In particular we promoted the workshops at the Arts House and a wide range of products that can be produced in them. We also showcased any remaining work on promotional days over a course of Saturdays in 'The Orchard Centre' in Taunton.

T-shirts

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Defining scholarly activity in College-Based Higher Education

As part of my role as an enhancement practitioner for HE, I have investigated scholarly activity in College-Based Higher Education (CBHE) and began by trying to define it. Many of us would think we had a pretty good idea of what it is – doing a masters, being engaged in research – but it turned out to be not that straight forward. I decided to apply a model of reflection often used in social pedagogy that focuses on facts, feelings, findings and finally future, to structure this investigation.

The facts are that one in ten students studying at HE level are doing so in an FE college, so CBHE is a significant part of the HE sector. Research carried out by the Mixed Economy Group (King, *et al*., 2014) gathered the views of over 800 HE in FE students. Getting a job at the end of their courses was of greatest importance to them. They saw this as being directly related to the teaching skills of their teachers and the extent to which they were up-to-date in their subject. It was not important to the students that staff were undertaking research, although they did expect them to have a higher qualification than the one they were being taught.

A key finding from a recent survey (Buckley, Soilemetzidis and Hillman, 2015) relates to the importance that students put on their teachers in higher education being trained to teach. When asked to rank the importance of three characteristics of the people who teach them, students rated staff having been trained in how to teach (39%) and having professional or industry expertise (44%) above staff being active researchers (17%).

As part of my role, I am required to mentor lecturers who have been asked to teach on HE courses. It is not unusual in an FE college for staff to teach not only at FE level but also HE. Indeed, in our institution, there are examples of staff teaching from level 2 up to level 5, a situation not found in traditional higher education institutions (HEI), and which creates its own particular set of challenges. Recently, when meeting for the first time with one of my mentees, who was new to teaching HE, practically the first thing he said to me in a rather worried voice was, “I haven’t got an MA.” The perception that to teach in HE means having this, or a similar or even higher qualification, is a deeply ingrained one, and I am sure it is not unusual for staff put in such a position to have similar anxieties. Most of us experienced HE at an HEI and were taught by staff with qualifications way beyond the level we were studying at. That was the expectation and it has remained intact, perhaps causing anxious feelings and undermining teachers’ confidence when faced with delivering at an HE level.

I have found that CBHE is a relatively new environment, so fresh definitions of research and scholarly activity, which are more appropriate to this more diverse HE landscape, are being sought. Whilst students might not put traditional scholarly activity at the top of their most-wanted list, they still expect the staff teaching them to be at the top of their game, especially in College-Based Higher Education, where vocational courses might dominate the HE offering. They expect them to be good, qualified teachers; to keep abreast of the latest developments in their discipline; and to still be practising it. By and large, the profile of FE staff fits all of these attributes, so teachers and lectures should take solace in this.

In the future, CBHE can only grow, particularly in the present climate with colleges merging to form larger conglomerate groups. Teaching skills need to be maintained and continuously updated. Staff need to keep abreast of the latest developments in their subjects or practices, particularly perhaps for vocational programmes in which students are making an investment with a promise of a job as a return. Much of this could be called scholarly activity. However, regardless of the definition, it is of the greatest importance that lecturers have the opportunity to engage in scholarly activity and to be given the resources, as well as the space, to participate in it, enabling them to feel confident and secure in delivering CBHE.

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A journey in developing a research and scholarship culture in College-Based Higher Education

Introduction

This article explains our College's approach to developing a culture of Research and Scholarly Activity (RASA) and its transformative journey in providing support for staff, including the challenges, pitfalls and successes encountered. A literature review explores RASA within College-Based Higher Education (CBHE) and the barriers faced, with reference to the differing nature of RASA in higher education institutions (HEIs). This article stems from our presentation given at the Association of Colleges (AoC) HE Research Conference in June 2016 (AoC, 2016). The article has subsequently been published in the peer-reviewed AoC publication (2017, pp. 50 – 57).

Traditionally, FE colleges offer FE vocational courses. However, in the last two decades there has been a significant shift towards a diverse provision of vocational higher education (HE), including the offer of postgraduate courses. Courses are provided through franchised university partnerships, non-franchised academic co-operation agreements, awarding bodies or colleges' own awarding powers. Such diverse provision poses questions about whether colleges face any challenges with regards to RASA development and whether there are mechanisms that colleges can put in place in order to support their staff. The UK government urges colleges to expand their HE offer and demonstrate staff engagement in RASA, which currently means that 'the foot has grown, and it needs a better-fitting shoe to accommodate this change' (Feather, 2016, p. 1).

Literature review

Over the years, college-based education has gained numerous terms that define its diverse, fast-paced and changing environment. These include: hybrid sector (Turner *et al*., 2009); heterogeneous sector (Eaton, 2015, cited in Lea, 2015); Cinderella sector with its McDonaldization approach (cited in Hayes, 2007); or IADHD (Institutional Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder) sector (Anderson, Wahlberry and Barton, 2003). Despite this, colleges that deliver HE have an obligation to comply with the Quality Code for Higher Education to keep up-to-date with the developments in their disciplines, evidence their engagement in RASA and demonstrate the distinct nature of 'HEness' (Lea and Simmons, 2012).

In line with the Higher Education Academy, our College has adopted Boyer's definition of scholarship: the scholarship of discovery, teaching, integration and application (Boyer, 1990). These four types of scholarship represent the process of undertaking research, synthesising the acquired information and applying theory into practice via teaching. There are academics who argue whether certain aspects of Boyer's scholarship model should only be applied to the university system, such as the scholarship of discovery (Young, 2002; Schofield and Burton, 2015). However, could these separate scholarship demarcations be blurred or 'permutated' in the context of the 'research-teaching nexus'? (Lea, 2015, p. 61). Lea (2015) also refers to the terms 'research-led teaching' and 'research-informed teaching'. In college-based RASA, 'research-informed teaching' is arguably the most common. A lecturer can collate primary data on an innovative teaching method, engage in the scholarship of its application, integrate this new knowledge and ultimately teach using the method. That said, Boyer's (1990) four dimensions of academic practice can lead even a college-based practitioner to become a well-rounded scholar (Lea, 2015), that engages not only with one dimension of Boyer's (1990) academic scholarship, but all four.

Jolanta Peters and Pauline Osborne presentating at the AoC HE Research conference in 2016

According to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) (2015), scholarly activity in the college-based environment may not necessarily demonstrate original or primary research, or the 'scholarship of discovery' (Boyer, 1990) that leads to dissemination via peer-reviewed journals or authored books. Lecturers delivering HE in FE act as interpreters of the subject matter through their application of RASA to teaching, as well as being the modifiers of the curriculum rather than originators. It effectively focuses on the CBHE staff's ability to be involved in more applied research, informing their practice through industrial updating and work shadowing, keeping up-to-date with the discipline through secondary research, engaging in CPD, staff development and working with the degree awarding bodies in enhancing the current curricula or developing new ones, which lead to a positive impact on students (QAA, 2015). Simmons and Lea (2013) summarise college-based scholarly activity as adding value to the students' learning opportunities, the overall quality of teaching and learning, the raising of academic standards, and an innovative curriculum that meets employer needs and the currency of staff subject knowledge. Indeed, CBHE lecturers' strength is their ability to teach a broad range of subjects to a variety of students at a number of levels and to diversify their teaching approach.

King and Widdowson (2009, p. 19) suggest that an appropriate definition of scholarly activity for a FE college lies in a:

> middle path between the research-led approach of a traditional HEI and a more appropriate definition for a vocationally focussed FEC [further education college]. This is likely to reflect the FE sector's focus on teaching and learning, whilst drawing heavily on the professional body expectations facing industry-active tutors.

This argument seems highly appropriate and is in line with Feather (2012, p. 246) who argues that 'to understand scholarship, we must not settle for the status quo – that is, what is handed to us – but persevere in our quest for new knowledge and true understanding'. He goes on to state that 'scholarship is dynamic, and therefore needs to adapt to new environments and factors affecting it' (Elliott 1996a, 1996b, cited in Feather, 2012, p. 246).

Despite this broad approach to defining CBHE scholarly activity, a range of barriers are highlighted within the literature that restrict college-based staff from engaging in RASA. The questions we aim to answer refer to the exploration of these barriers and whether, through understanding them, approaches can be implemented to support college-based RASA, based on the example of our college that delivers HE in FE.

Some of the barriers identified in the literature refer to workload related issues, teaching commitments and the pastoral work associated with the FE and HE divide within the same institution, in addition to the need to switch between two levels of education, which leaves staff with little time to engage in RASA (Young, 2002; Burkill *et al*., 2008; Medcalf, 2014; Feather, 2016). Balancing time and subsequent other commitments, an issue raised by Young as early as 2002, still resonate in the most recent literature (Feather, 2016). Some reflective research papers refer to teaching hours being 720 (Child, 2009); others refer to a minimum of 830 hours (Young, 2002; Harwood and Harwood, 2004). It is unclear how these hours were calculated and whether they include cover provision for absent colleagues. However, 828 hours is certainly a norm in more than one college.

Literature also refers to the levels of anxiety felt by CBHE staff due to their mixed understanding of identity – whether they are FE or HE and having to make adjustments in their thinking when switching between levels, sometimes in the space of five minutes (Young, 2002; Harwood and Harwood, 2004). Conflicting quality assurance systems and the time invested in understanding and complying with them also point to the lack of sufficient time for engaging in RASA (Scott, 2010). CBHE staff report isolation in terms of internal and external contacts with other practitioners in their disciplines, as compared with their HEI counterparts, leading them to levels of anxiety associated with this isolation (Young, 2002; Medcalf, 2014; Feather, 2016).

To exacerbate the issue, Young (2002) and Lea and Simmons (2012) state that often within HE in FE there is a lack of support at an institutional level, a lack of recognition for teaching HE and a lack of commitment from college management in providing support with regards to RASA. Although the majority of the literature points to the negative aspects encountered by college staff in terms of their engagement in RASA, Medcalf (2014, p. 18) summarises that CBHE practitioners are 'conscious that they are subscribing to the value that research and scholarly activity have a key part to play in their professional development and professional responsibilities and subject updating'.

Despite the challenges highlighted in the literature, this article explores a South West college's journey in establishing holistic mechanisms to support staff engagement with RASA in CBHE.

The establishment of the Research, Scholarship and Ethics Committee

The College set up a Research, Scholarship and Ethics (RSE) Committee in 2011 as a starting point for the focused development of RASA. In addition to supporting a number of staff to undertake Masters qualifications, a key activity of the Committee has been to launch and run an annual bidding round for funds to support small-scale research or scholarship activities.

In order to provide the necessary institutional support, certain foundations and a framework had to be established by the RSE Committee in order to instigate an understanding of RASA amongst the College staff. Clear definitions were established to help understand key terms, such as: research, scholarly activity, gate-keeping, research participants, research ethics and research information sheet. The adoption of institutionally accepted terms helped minimise the ambiguity for college researchers and provided convergence across the institution.

A selection of the staff research posters on display at the University Centre Somerset's HE library

The College's approach to RASA is in line with the argument put forward by Feather, who states that 'the field of scholarship should not be forced upon a person, as this is likely to disillusion and demotivate that person' (Brew, 2010, cited in Feather, 2012, p. 252). 'Individuals need to be allowed to select their preferred field of study, to be given the time and resources to explore that field, and to interact with other like-minded people' (Feather, 2012, p. 252). Staff at our College are free to choose their field of scholarship and research method. Nor is activity limited to action research. Jameson and Hillier (2003, cited in Feather, 2012, pp. 247-248) argue that action research is the best research method in the HE in FE context. It is true that this form of research does fit well. Summers and Cutting (2016) provide examples of action research in the form of a co-operative inquiry carried out at the College in relation to education for sustainable development. However, as Feather (2012) argues, it would be wrong to conclude that research in FE colleges is limited to action research. The chapter written by Osborne in Summers and Cutting (2016) provides an example of a research project that involved wider research methodologies carried out at the College.

The RSE Committee not only acts as a driving force and a support mechanism for RASA, but also performs a gate-keeping role, in particular with regards to the research project's ethical

considerations. Ethics committees are 'bridging the gap between conduct and compliance' (Israel and Hay, 2006, p. 131); however, there is a lack of evidence of such committees being established in CBHE environments, as more focus in literature is given to HEIs' ethics committees (Mcareavey and Muir, 2011; Remenyi, Swan and Van Den Assem, 2011). The Committee requires researchers to expose their research and scholarship intentions for ethical scrutiny. The College's RSE has therefore established a research ethics policy, ethical clearance form, research participant's information sheet and a consent form.

The complexities of research ethics at this College are simplified through the use of the research ethics scrutiny diagram, otherwise referred to as 'research ethics traffic lights', which provides a visual diagram with scenarios showing when research projects may require ethical scrutiny by the RSE Committee. There are cases when such scenarios may show an 'amber light', in which case the final decision about the ethical clearance requirements are made by the RSE Committee.

The article, published by the AoC (2017), also discusses the successes of the staff research and scholarship awards, RASA dissemination and outputs and the electronic research repository.

The College's Staff Research Guide on the VLE - an online repository

Conclusion

Developing a research and scholarship culture within CBHE is a long and challenging journey. There are varying arguments in literature with regards to what could or should constitute RASA within CBHE. Barriers identified in the literature range from lack of time, to lack of institutional support. Although there are barriers to overcome, progress can be made, as seen through our College's journey. The establishment of a RSE Committee with funds to award on an annual basis for small-scale research and scholarship projects has had a significant impact in developing the culture within this institution. The funding of Masters qualifications has also had an impact, as has the annual Research Symposium and the annual research and scholarship showcase publication. These activities set an expectation of such work being carried out across the College, thereby influencing the RASA culture for FE and HE academic and non-academic staff alike, all of whom are able to contribute to improving the student experience through such involvement. The award infrastructure, ethics protocols, online guidance and repositories

support staff with engagement in research and scholarship.

An appropriate RASA culture for CBHE needs to be established within each FE college in line with their individual strategic aims, offer and partners' expectations. The nature of this culture and the definition of research and scholarship towards which they are working or aspiring is a question for debate within colleges and across the sector. Funding opportunities to support research and scholarship activities in CBHE would considerably help in this cultural shift. This is important in order to ensure that what is offered is fit for purpose and is delivered by those who have credibility. This publication is one of the prime indicators that our College will continue its journey in the development of an appropriate research and scholarship culture.

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Using creative reflection as an academic

Introduction

Over the past few years BA Early Childhood Studies (BA ECS) students have studied a work-based learning module in the third year of their degree that is assessed via a reflective, creative piece of artwork. Some students have found this challenging as they are used to writing essays for assessment. In Early Years we foster the idea of a reflective approach to practice from the start. Foundation degree students are encouraged to keep reflective journals and write reflectively in their professional practice modules. Students are already familiar with several theoretical models for reflection, such as Gibbs (1988), Kolb (1984), Fook and Gardner (2007) and Tripp (1993) by the third year of their course. The creative assessment is a means for the student to show their growth as a critically reflective practitioner over the course of their degree without using a more 'traditional' assessment method.

I am a tutor on the BA ECS and have recently gained a PhD. I thought it would be beneficial to produce a creative piece of work alongside my students to reflect upon my own learning journey and to also appreciate the feelings of non-artists and my own students when asked to produce artwork.

In his trial speech Socrates (cited in Plato, 1999) is believed to have suggested that an unexamined life is not worth living. Early Childhood Studies students are encouraged to reflect on all aspects of their practice and academic learning as a basis for growth as critical thinkers. Arts-based reflective learning was originally defined by Walker and Avant (2011) and has been used in many diverse disciplines over the last few decades. Authors have reported the benefits of using arts-based reflective activities during the educational process in the fields of business (Hughes, 2011), medicine (Jones *et al*., 2016; Karkabi, et a.,l 2016; Lyon *et al*., 2013), social work (Keddell, 2011) midwifery (Barry *et al*., 2017; Walker, 2007), nursing (Reiger and Cernomas, 2013) and education (Milne, 2004).

However, one also needs to consider that students following an ECS programme intend to work with young children and, despite a government drive towards a narrow focus on core curriculum subjects (Department for Education, 2013; Annetts, 2016), educationalists tend to agree that it is vital for creativity to be nurtured in young children (Prentice, 2000; Nutbrown, 2013). By incorporating creativity in assessment, students may subsequently feel more confident to support creativity in children (McCormick Davis, 2005; Dehouske, 2006; Kaimal *et al*., 2014).

The process

Students are given the brief for the work at the start of the academic year and are encouraged to keep a reflective journal during the year as a basis for the art work. Students are assured that previous artistic ability is not required; they are reassured that the piece is about personal expression. The learning outcomes are as follows: students should show that they have personally engaged with the work, have creatively expressed their thoughts and emotions, whilst also acknowledging different perspectives or voices. The work should show deep and critical reflection and incorporate a questioning stance which looks beneath or beyond the surface.

Students also submit a 100 word abstract – a brief outline of the thoughts and emotions that have been explored and represented in their creative piece of work. Students share their ideas in tutorials throughout the year with their tutor and discuss their development. At the start of the year lectures support the reflective process and cover the use of metaphor. Some lectures are supported by the art department, where students have an opportunity to explore using different materials. The work is submitted during May and an exhibition arranged, where the work can be viewed by others and marked by tutors. I was keen to observe all outcomes and student deadlines, so that equity would be promoted. When students shared ideas, they also encouraged me to do the same, once I had mentioned that I would also be creating a reflective piece of work. This year, because I was also embarking on a creative journey, I also shared my ideas with a critical friend (from Plymouth University) and members of the art department, who were able to encourage me to think in different ways about what I wanted to represent. I kept a reflective journal to track my ideas and also a notebook where I drew ideas.

The growth of ideas

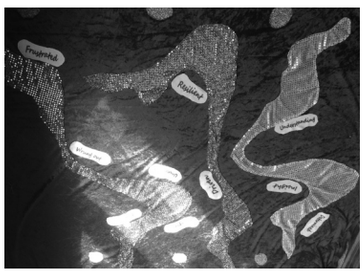
My PhD research had been based around women's experiences of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after the birth of their baby. The research was both quantitative and qualitative. I used online questionnaires to determine risk characteristics for PTSD and then interviewed women about their views on the best type of support for them.

Owing to my research involvement with perinatal women, I very quickly felt that my overall idea for a creative piece should be related to the birth process. I developed this by creating a uterus, birth canal, baby, placenta and umbilical cord, which represented various parts of my research journey and my working and home life.

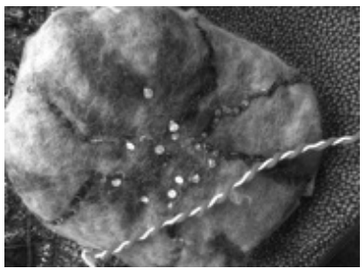
Uterus – As in life and metaphorically, I saw this as representing the nurturance of ideas and the very beginnings of the academic process. At the centre are the key books that challenged me to seek to empower women whose birth experience had been traumatic. I covered the rather basic model fashioned from chicken wire in drawings. The drawings were from key renaissance and enlightenment artists such as Leonardo da Vinci, Piero della Francesca Madonna del Parto, Botticelli, Jan van Eyck and William Blake. I wanted to link this part of the project to the birth of modern thinking, as this also related to one of the modules I teach about how we perceive childhood over time in the third year BA Early Childhood Studies degree.

Feathers became a metaphor not just for ideas taking flight, but for the insubstantial nature of the first pre-flight feathers and my first insubstantial research ideas.

Birth canal – This was the main part of the project signifying the journey aspect. The PhD journey took six long years to complete. However, a woman's journey to recovery after experiencing birth trauma may take even longer. The inside was hidden where frustrations, despair and reflections took place. The outside consisted of fabric and images, twisted together to represent the passage of time, the roughness of the journey, the impact of PTSD on postnatal women and critique of the health service. Willow encircled this showing the support provided by family.

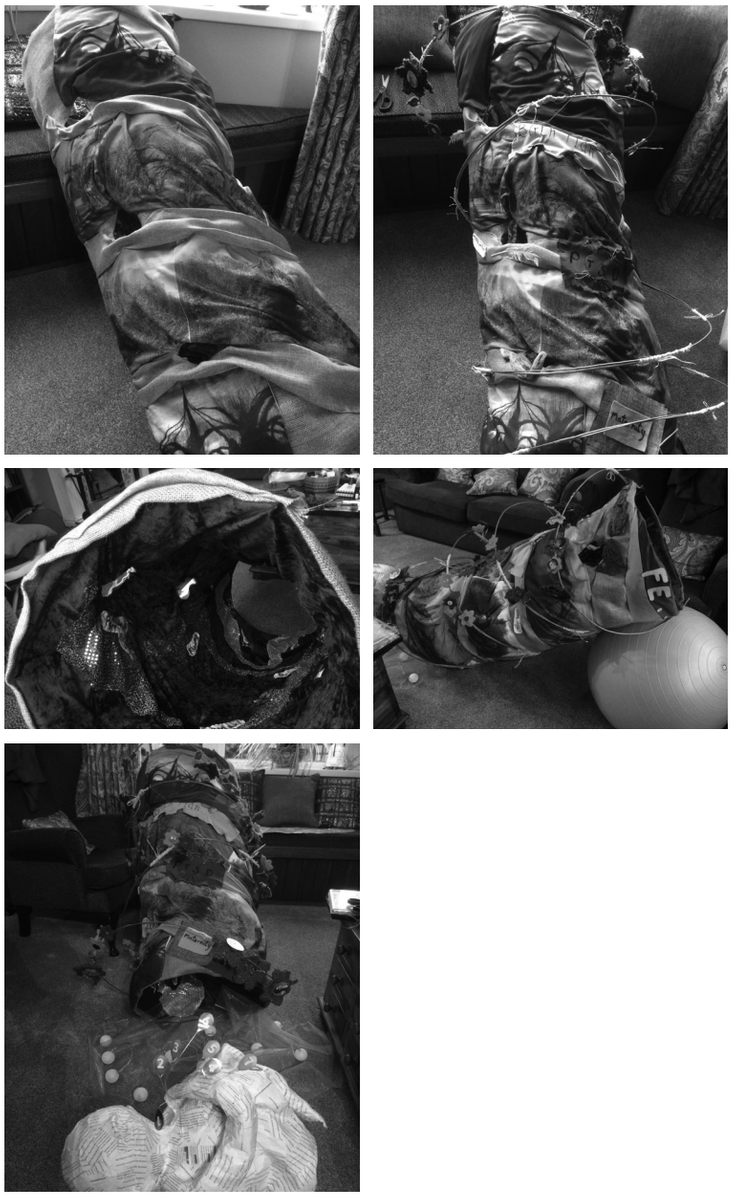


Placenta and umbilical cord – This represented the advice and nurture provided by my PhD supervisors and also encompassed the gentle reflection afforded by taking walks with my dog throughout the research process. Women often refer to the birth of a placenta after the baby as a kind of healing, so it was important that this was made from soft materials.



Baby – This represented the fruit of my labours, the thesis. The baby is made from every chapter of my thesis. Surrounding the baby are the outputs and consequences of the journey. Since completing the research, I now support postnatal women by working as a chaplaincy volunteer, and I have continued to write research articles for the midwifery press.

The art work has now been completed and was exhibited on 10th May alongside that of my students. I will be reporting further on the process and on my reflections at the College's research symposium.



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TERRY PEERS
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Raising the flag for the LRC catalogue: completing the Heritage Flagship Programme

Summary of activities:

As education professionals, we all understand the importance to learners of using good quality academic resources. My role as an LRC Coordinator encompasses both selecting those resources and promoting their use to students. This can be very challenging, especially when search engines like Google are widely perceived among learners to be omniscient providers of instant, free and accurate information suitable for use at any level. Persuading students that they need to take the time to use the resources we recommend, that research is a more involved process than "just googling", is as difficult as changing any other ingrained behaviour. Help, however, is at hand from an often overlooked quarter: the library catalogue. With certain adaptations, the LRC catalogue can act like an extra member of LRC staff, guiding students to our best resources.

Anecdotal evidence suggested that very few students were using the LRC catalogue to find resources; usage by staff was thought to be little better. As LRC staff we were also aware that our Library Management System (LMS), Heritage, included a number of features designed to help students, which we were not using because we did not really understand them. Optimisation of our use of Heritage could only help students to become better library users, thus giving them the best chance of finding and accessing the academic resources they need.

Heritage Cirqa "Flagship Site" badge

Fortunately, in September 2015, the Heritage Flagship Programme was launched by IS Oxford, the employee-owned company which produces Heritage. The Flagship Programme was born out of weekly support emails which offered Heritage users hints and tips on enhancing their LMS and which library staff would store for future use but which often were not actioned. By converting these emails into an

online course with a recognised outcome which library staff can use as evidence of continuing professional development, Heritage found a clever way of encouraging libraries to make the most of their system. The Flagship Programme is a series of ten challenges, each one focusing on a different aspect or function of Heritage, and is delivered by email at the rate of one a month. Heritage itself is divided into two halves: Heritage Cirqa, which manages the "behind the scenes" operations of the LRC such as circulations (issues, returns, reservations, etc.) and Heritage Online which is the user-facing online catalogue. The Flagship Programme addresses aspects of both sides of Heritage and is available at no extra cost to subscribing libraries.

Screenshot of the Heritage Online catalogue page at Bridgwater & Taunton College

A typical challenge explains a feature of Heritage (e.g. the ability to add search hints to Heritage Online, whereby users that enter certain search terms are guided by additional prompts towards selected resources), provides links to help sheets on the Heritage support website, and concludes with the Challenge proper: the implementation of the feature in question. Screenshots are then uploaded to the support website to provide proof that the feature has been implemented and these screenshots, together with answers to any accompanying questions, form the response to the Challenge. The ten topics covered by the Flagship Programme are as follows:

- Enquiry Groups
- Search Hints
- Stock Management
- Library News
- Media Types
- Scheduled Events
- Widgets
- Global Change
- Keyword corrections
- Assisting your users with searching

A member of staff at IS Oxford marks the responses and returns results promptly by email. Successful completion of all ten challenges gains the participating library "Flagship Site" status, with a certificate of excellence and an accompanying logo to display on Heritage Online and/or their institutional website. The individual who completes the programme also earns a certificate that they can use as evidence of CPD.

Key points learnt:

Although I have been using Heritage since we first purchased it in 2000, it has gone through many upgrades and acquired a multitude

of features over that time. Library catalogues in general, like most other IT systems, have also changed considerably in recent years and it is easy to overlook the importance of those changes. The catalogue is no longer an unattractive, clunky, isolated machine which just searches one library's physical stock. Heritage Online has the ability to become the library's own webpage, informing users of our services, providing them with 24/7 access to our e-resources and guiding them towards our best resources in the manner of a well-trained assistant. Completing the Flagship Programme has caused me to reflect more deeply on the potential a well-tuned library catalogue has for promoting the use of high quality academic resources as part of a structured research process. IS Oxford have developed a very good system; the LRC has purchased that system and is learning how to use its more advanced features. However, its effectiveness will only be maximised with greater involvement from teaching staff in advocating resources and catalogue use to learners.

Impact on teaching & learning and learning support:

Completing the Flagship Programme has enhanced the efficiency of our LMS and given us an online catalogue which is far more attractive, useful and informative for our students. It has also given us a direct way to communicate aspects of our service to our learners. As a direct result of completing the Flagship Programme, our Heritage Online page is now tailored to suit the requirements of our different groups of users: staff, students and HE students.

Users can search not only the catalogue, but also our three key e-resources: Britannica Academic, EBSCO Academic Search Elite and Issues Online, making the catalogue an even more obvious starting point for research. The News and Information section keeps users up-to-date with developments in the LRC, highlights new resources and additional services such as help with referencing, and provides reading lists that link straight through to the catalogue (thus indicating location and availability of recommended texts).

In addition, the Flagship Programme has created energy around our LMS which was not there before: we have progressed to customising Heritage Online with the College brand and adding a "rate and review" feature for our stock. The latter enables teaching staff to recommend resources directly to students by adding a star rating and/or a personal review, which is viewable on the catalogue. Involvement in the Flagship Programme meant that we approached these innovations enthusiastically and with a "can do" attitude that we might otherwise have been lacking.

The Flagship Programme can also be used to provide evidence of a library's commitment to providing high quality support for learners. We intend to use it in our Strategic Assessment Review and other institutions have included it in their submissions to the Quality Assessment Agency for Higher Education. For a member of the library staff the Flagship Programme is an opportunity to take part in practical, flexible, well-structured, free CPD which strengthens IT skills and which can be used towards their appraisal or professional registration.

We now include Heritage Online statistics in our monthly report on e-resource usage, with a view to measuring the impact of any innovations we make to the catalogue. We also encourage all LRC Coordinators to take the Flagship Challenge as it is an ideal way for them to learn how to use the many features incorporated in Heritage to help our learners succeed. If you have not looked at the LRC

catalogue for a while, you may be pleasantly surprised; if you have any ideas about how it could be used to support your students, or you just want to know more, please get in touch.

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