

Title	The impact of strategic agencies on university partnerships with cultural heritage organisations in England
Type	Report
URL	http://ualresearchonline.arts.ac.uk/9957/
Date	2016
Citation	Dent, Katie and Willcocks, Judy (2016) The impact of strategic agencies on university partnerships with cultural heritage organisations in England. Project Report. National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement.
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The impact of strategic agencies on university partnerships with cultural heritage organisations in England

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May 2016

A report for the Museum University Partnerships Initiative

The Museum University Partnership Initiative (MUPI) is a collaboration between Share Academy and the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE), funded by Arts Council England.

The project aims to maximise the potential for museums and universities to work together to mutually beneficial aims. It explores how the Higher Education sector can be opened up to smaller and medium sized museums whose unique collections and engagement expertise are often an underutilised resource that could benefit academics, teaching staff, and students within the Higher Education sector, whilst adding value to the work of the museums involved and contributing to their long term resilience.

This report is a synthesis of existing knowledge from Share Academy and the NCCPE and background research on five strategic organisations researching, facilitating or advocating for collaborative activities between universities and museums in England.

The MUPI project involved a range of activities alongside this review. These included:

- Networking events ('sandpits') to bring together university and museum staff to develop project ideas
- A review of REF impact case studies
- A pilot study of museum-university partnerships involving a literature review, survey and qualitative interviews
- A stakeholder event where the interim findings of the project were shared (March 2016)
- Convening an advisory group and funders forum

Full details of the MUPI project can be found on the NCCPE website where other outputs from the project can also be accessed: <https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/work-with-us/current-projects/museum-university-partnerships-initiative>

The impact of strategic agencies on university partnerships with cultural heritage organisations in England

This report is the result of a joint research project between Share Academy and the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE), funded by Arts Council England (ACE) with the objective of investigating current collaborative activities happening between universities and museums in England. This report comprises of one of the outputs from a wider portfolio of work undertaken in 2016 by Share Academy and the NCCPE under the umbrella of the Museum University Partnerships Initiative (MUPI).

The NCCPE was established in 2008 as part of a £9.2m project to inspire a culture change in how UK universities engaged with the public. This 'Beacons for Public Engagement' project has provided useful insights into how universities might embrace greater societal engagement in their work. Hosted by the University of Bristol and the University of the West of England, the NCCPE has been working with universities across the UK to create a culture within UK Higher Education where public engagement is embedded as a valued and recognised activity at all levels.

Share Academy was founded in 2011 as a partnership project between the University of the Arts London, UCL and the London Museum Group with the ambition of promoting, brokering and evaluating partnerships between universities and museums in the London Region. Funded by Arts Council England, Share Academy spent four years exploring the potential of such partnerships and, more recently, has been developing methodologies for sharing intelligence on collaborative practice with museums and universities across the England. While Share Academy is led by museum services in academic institutions, the programme's strength lies in its links with the wider museum sector and, in particular, its focus on small to medium sized museums.

This report is a synthesis of existing knowledge from Share Academy and the NCCPE and background research on five strategic organisations researching, facilitating or advocating for collaborative activities between universities and museums in England. The five organisations this report draws on are: Beyond the Creative Campus, the University Museums Group (UMG), The National Archives (TNA), The Cultural Capital Exchange (TCCE), and the AHRC's Connected Communities programme. The findings laid out in this report are drawn from information publically available, grey literature published by the five organisations and a series of five interviews with representatives of the five organisations.

These five organisations have been chosen to illustrate a diverse range of strategic organisations and strategic activities around university and cultural heritage sector partnerships currently being undertaken in England. Beyond the Creative Campus provides an example of a funded research network facilitating conversations between academics and practitioners; UMG occupies an advocacy role for university museums engaging with policy makers; TNA is the official archive for the UK government and an Independent Research Organisation (IRO) and maintains a leadership role for the archives sector; TCCE is a

membership network for universities; and Connected Communities is an AHRC funded research programme providing awards for researchers to work with community partners and organisations.

Although this report draws predominantly on data from the five organisations listed, we would make it clear that these are not the only organisations working strategically to promote cross-sector collaboration between universities and the cultural heritage sector. However, our intention is to give a broad rather than exhaustive account of the practice of cross-sector collaboration between the cultural sector and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). At the outset we should also acknowledge an unintentional bias towards university initiated activities. Four out of the five organisations that this report details are university or Research Council initiatives; the exception is TNA, an independent Research Organisation.

Our university 'heaviness' is not meant to indicate that collaborations are only being instigated by universities or university networks. However, as we outline in our literature review and wider report on the dynamics of university cultural sector collaborations, museum initiated projects (in a widely generalised sense) tend to rely upon local networks. The five organisations we cover in this report have networks and activities which span nationally and internationally. Museums are also less likely to continue the (active) dissemination of their projects following completion¹. This is, in part, due to the fact that funding for cultural heritage organisations in the UK favours the maintenance of core assets, whereas university funding prioritises the evidencing of impact and knowledge exchange through the dissemination of case studies and maintenance of networks.

In addition to the five organisations covered by this report, others of note include: The Institute of Cultural Capital based at the University of Liverpool and Liverpool John Moores University, the AHRC funded Knowledge Exchange Hubs for the Creative Economy, and the Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change working from Manchester University. Organisations working regionally including the Midlands3Cities Collaborative Doctoral Training Partnership and a range of activities being facilitated by Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums (TWAM) including seed funding for research and development projects.

Widening our approach

In the process of producing this report we widened our original remit beyond activities *strictly* happening between universities and museums to include the wider heritage, cultural and creative sectors. We propose that widening our investigation allows the inclusion of valuable and relevant activities that may have been overlooked had we maintained a more narrow perspective. These include activities involving museums and activities that may influence museum practices through the publication of documents on best practice and the dynamic exchange of knowledge and learning through professional peer groups and networking events.

Our intention for this report is that it may be used both as a stand-alone resource - an introduction and overview to current strategic activities happening in England between HEIs and the museum sector - and read in partnership with the literature review and research wider report.

This report refers specifically to *England*, although the activities of the organisations we researched reach across the UK and (in the case of Beyond the Creative Campus) internationally. The reason that we have chosen to limit our discussion to England is that there are subtle and significant differences to funding and organisational structures, along with specific dynamics related to geography, community and governance, in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. Hence, we have chosen to consistently refer to England as this is where the knowledge base of Share Academy and the NCCPE has been established.

The Five Organisations

The organisations we focus on in this report range widely in size, age and influence. This section of the report provides detail on the history, structure and achievements of the organisations, including information on the particular dynamics that have led to their development and sustainability.

At the beginning of each section we make explicit a series of questions that have guided our investigation. Each section then provides more contextual information on the organisations' activities. At the end of each section we signpost the relevant findings from each organisations' research and evaluation (where available), highlighting any points that intersect or divert from the experiences of Share Academy and the NCCPE and our findings from the Literature Review.

The Research Network: Beyond the Creative Campus

How are they funded? Beyond the Creative Campus have been funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

Do they exist specifically to foster university / cultural sector partnerships or is it part of a wider portfolio or work? This organisation was funded specifically to establish a network for academics and cultural and creative practitioners.

Do they fund partnerships? No.

Do they research or evaluate partnerships? They have researched the context in which partnerships take place.

Do they actively broker partnerships? No.

Do they provide any kind of third space through events or online networks? Yes, temporary spaces have been provided through conferences and workshops. The organisation has also supported a website and maintained a Twitter account to facilitate knowledge sharing and networking.

Have they produced any advice or guidance on partnership working? Beyond the Creative Campus have not specifically published guidance on collaboration. However they have published academic and grey literature on their key findings and their website holds an archive of presentations, some of which explicitly address the pros and cons of partnership working.

Beyond the Creative Campus was an AHRC funded research network active between October 2012 and October 2014. The project was originally funded for two years but was granted a six month extension. The research network was led by two academics, Dr Roberta Comunian, Kings College London, and Dr Abigail Gilmore, University of Manchester, who shared interests and experience of researching HEI's and arts organisations. Both had undertaken research on the creative and cultural industries in regions in Northern Englandⁱⁱ. The research network established an advisory board that included representatives from the creative industries along with the AHRC and Arts Council England. Advisory board members played a key role in promoting and disseminating learning and resources beyond the academy.

The research network specifically focused on collaborative activities happening between HEIs and creative practitioners / the creative industries. The network organised an academic conference; facilitated engagement activities; organised knowledge sharing and networking activities and provided keynote speakers for conferences and events in the UK and internationally. The workshops invited academic, freelance, industry and wider heritage and creative sector participants to share case studies. The research network also participated in the AHRC's Creative Economy Showcase 2014, with 'The Love Story Project' facilitating an open Twitter conversation about collaboration between higher education and the creative industries. Although Beyond the Creative Campus is no longer funded and active in its initial form, the research team have continued to publicise and disseminate findings, including (to date) six journal articles and a guest edited special issue for the *International Journal of Cultural Policy* by Comunian and Gilmore under the title *Beyond the Creative Campus* (2016).

Although the research network's outputs were predominantly circulated for an academic audience, the network also produced a grey literature report for a wider interest group (including policy makers) and it continues to support a website where full information on the network and additional resources, such as publications and a selection of video recordings from conferences, remain available. This enables the circulation of the research networks' learning and resources beyond a solely academic audience, although predominantly the main audience has remained academic. While the research network was funded by the AHRC for its activities, including venue hire, participant and facilitator travel and expenses, the time resource of the academics leading the network received only limited funding. This time was sourced and supported from the academics' own institution.

As Beyond the Creative Campus was supported through funding from the AHRC it is worth noting how the activities of Beyond the Creative Campus might be situated, in relation to the current wider funding priorities and research culture of higher education, with specific emphasis on public engagement and the co-production of research. We make note of this wider context here although this is clearly relevant for all five of the organisations.

December 2014 saw the publication the Research Excellence Framework (REF) findings. The REF is a process of expert review introduced by the four funding bodies for UK higher education and is used to allocate future research funding to institutions. What is known as the 'REF cycle' began in 2011 and culminated in 2014. For the first time the REF looked at research 'impact' defined as '*any effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, the environment or quality of life beyond academia*' (REF Key Facts; 2015).

Another significant development coinciding with the main period of activity of Beyond the Creative Campus was the establishment of the Arts and Humanities Research Council's £16m funded Knowledge Exchange Hubs for the Creative Economy (2012-2016). This initiative generated research activities focused on collaboration and co-production carried out in four dedicated 'Hubs' adding to the significant drive to evidence collaboration and co-production in academia. The work of the Beyond the Creative Campus network can therefore be viewed in the context of this wider effort to codify and evaluate the impact of university research.

Research and evaluation

Beyond the Creative Campus make several key observations on the nature of collaborations between academic and non-academic institutions. Their focus is on the creative economy but might extended to include community, culture and heritage partners.

Beyond the Creative Campus highlight **three models** of partnerships that happen between Higher Education and the Creative Economy. These models are described as **Patron**, **Sponsor** and **Partner**. In each model the dynamic of the relationship is different, and Comunian and Gilmore highlight the models in order to raise awareness that not all activities labelled 'collaboration', 'co-production' or 'partnership' are the same and not all partnerships are of equivalence.

Share Academy's previous work has identified the role of contrasting organisational infrastructures in compounding imbalances, particularly in relation to payment systems and funding practices that predominantly see large grants awarded to the HEI partner directly. Beyond the Creative Campus also acknowledge a disconnect in power relations between universities (large and relatively well resourced) and the small organisations which make up the bulk of the creative economy.

Beyond the Creative Campus highlight the significant benefits HEI collaborations can bring to the wider community, particularly in relation to the facilitation of 'third spaces' (places where academic and non-academic practitioners can interact) outside the university campus, such as cultural centres or hubs.

Finally, Beyond the Creative Campus recognise some of the challenges of collaborative practice including the fact that university structures make working outside the institution difficult and time consuming. They also note that academia does not allow the time to build meaningful partnerships or have a clear structure for rewarding or recognising this collaborative activity.

The Professional Advocacy Group: University Museum Group (UMG)

How are they funded? UMG are funded via subscription fees.

Do they exist specifically to foster university / cultural sector partnerships or is it part of a wider portfolio or work? UMG are explicitly an advocacy organisation. However cross-sector partnership working falls within their wider remit of interest.

Do they fund partnerships? No.

Do they research or evaluate partnerships? Not directly. However they have produced a publication on impact and engagement and provide detailed case studies on collaborative projects that have taken place in university museums on their website.

Do they actively broker partnerships? No.

Do they provide any kind of third space through events or online networks? Not directly. However, UMG facilitate an annual conference with networking opportunities.

Have they produced any advice or guidance on partnership working? Not directly under the organisation. However members have published independently.

UMG was established as a professional advocacy group in 1987 and was 'developed to give university museums a common voice in matters of advocacy and policy making' (Merriman; 2002. 73). UMG was established in a period, following the economic recession of the 1970s, when universities had begun to see significant cuts in their funding from government. Despite holding a large proportion of nationally significant objects and collections, university museums were beginning to see closures and the dispersal/re-allocation of their collections. In the year preceding UMG's establishment Alan Warhurst, then director of Manchester University Museum and a significant figure in the establishment of UMG, published a paper in the *Museums Journal* titled 'Triple Crisis in University Museums' stating this triple crisis as one of identity and purpose, recognition and resources (Warhurst; 1986). It is useful to identify that UMG was formed in response to strains placed by significantly reduced government funding at a point of 'crisis' for university museums. Economic pressures and changes to government spending strategies acted as a catalyst in forming the professional advocacy group.

UMG is a membership organisation for university museums, galleries and collections. With funds collected from membership fees UMG delivers an annual conference and provides a forum to communicate and disseminate good practice for the university museum sector. University museums, galleries and collections may be used for public display, teaching and research. Research projects vary in size from an individual researcher to large partnership projects involving multiple academics from the museum's own university or outside institutions. Outside partners may also come from industry, freelance practitioners or other heritage organisations and projects can include local community groups or charity/not-for-profit partners.

Organisationally there is no standard structure for where a University museum or collection resides in its institution's organisational infrastructure. The museum or collection may be an academic department, as is the case with University of Cambridge Museums and Collections, or sit within the university's library service. Museums open to the public may be managed via the university's professional services; for example this is the case for UCL

museums. University museums and collections may also be used by university widening participation and public engagement departments to engage with school and college groups.

As identified in the work of Share Academy and other resources reviewing museum-university partnerships, the administrative infrastructure and procedures of universities, including finance and legal systems, can make working with outside partners difficult. This can also be the case for individual academics or small teams of researchers wishing to work with a large museum, such as one of the Nationals. However, where researchers or departments work directly with a university museum or collection, processes may be simplified. Tonya Nelson, Head of UCL Museums and Collections and UMG Secretary, describes:

"...a researcher can get into a university museum to do a research project much more easily than they would with a National museum. So if you want to try something out, do some testing, university museums are more flexible and accommodating. We see ourselves as experimental testbedsⁱⁱⁱ."

UMG is governed by a committee of professionals from university museums. As the governance of UMG is not funded, committee members' time is either given voluntarily or their UMG activities are embedded in their individual professional roles at host institutions. UMG has been granted funding for specific projects or outputs in the past (recently Arts Council England funded the production of a video resource). However, UMG is not linked into an ongoing funding stream outside of rolling membership fees.

In 2013 UMG, in partnership with their sister organisation University Museums in Scotland (UMIS), published on their website the report *IMPACT and ENGAGEMENT: University Museums for the 21st Century*. Highlighting the significant contribution university museums play in 'leveraging funding', along with detailing the economic contributions university museums and collections make, the report also details services and support provided by university museums in terms of public engagement student experience. Published whilst the first REF cycle was still active, the title and content of this report strongly tie into the emerging research impact agenda.

Research and evaluation

Though UMG have not directly produced research and guidance specifically around museum-university partnerships, their members, including Rebecca Reynolds, Catherine Speight and current Chair Kate Arnold-Foster, have published on the subject. We refer here to some key messages from this wider literature and information published on the UMG website.

Museums and universities both suffer from competing demands on their resources, meaning museum-university partnerships have required active brokerage and funding to ensure success (Arnold-Foster & Speight). This finding resonates with the experiences of Share Academy and the NCCPE.

University museums occupy a unique position with their understanding of both the higher education and museum sectors. As such they have the capacity to act as brokers between the two sectors. The University culture of experimentation and analysis also empowers university museums to act as a test-bed for the wider sector, experimenting with new practices and technologies.

University museums have responded effectively to the increasing expectation that universities and researchers will extend the impact of their research. Their skills and experience in this area can serve as a road map for the wider sector to engage with academia.

A Sector Leader: The National Archives (TNA)

How are they funded? TNA are funded by the UK Government.

Do they exist specifically to foster university / cultural sector partnerships or is it part of a wider portfolio or work? TNA do not primarily work to foster partnership working with higher education institutions. However, as the archive sector leader they have strong interests in activities concerning archives and they do support collaborations between different types of archive.

Do they fund partnerships? No.

Do they research or evaluate partnerships? Not directly. However, TNA is currently in the early stages of researching how archives are cited in academic publications.

Do they actively broker partnerships? Yes, between archives

Do they provide any kind of third space through events or online networks? Yes, TNA facilitate an annual conference for higher education, archive, heritage and cultural sector professionals in partnership with Research Libraries UK (RLUK). TNA also facilitate a substantial training programme for archivists, particularly through their Higher Education Archives Programme (HEAP).

Have they produced any advice or guidance on partnership working? Yes, TNA have produced a guidance document for archives working in collaboration with HEIs and they are currently conducting research into collecting drivers within higher education institutions, in partnership with RLUK.

TNA are funded by central government as an executive agency for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). In 2015 TNA published an advice document for collaboration between the archive and higher education sectors. In recent years TNA have also worked in partnership with RLUK to deliver an annual three day conference called *Discovering Collections, Discovering Communities* (www.dcdconference.com). The conference brings together professionals from the archive and higher education sectors along with professionals from the wider heritage sphere including museums. The conference offers opportunities to network and share learning around best practice. TNA has also established a Higher Education Archive Programme (HEAP) through which it provides networking and training opportunities specifically for professionals working in university archives.

TNA has introduced significant new organisational practices since 2010 and it is useful to look at TNA's recent history to understand the strategic role the organisation now plays for the archive sector. TNA has a well-established leading role as regulator for the public records system. There are over 200 regional archives that TNA has appointed to hold public records. TNA ensures that public records are safe, secure and stored in compliance with the Public Records Act 1958 and is responsible for the Archive Service Accreditation scheme within England. TNA's role was expanded in 2011 when the Museum Library and Archive Council was disbanded (MLA),^{iv} and TNA took on a leadership role for the archives sector. In this capacity TNA now works with over 2000 archives across England.

As well as the clear increase in the number of archives TNA now works with, the size and variety of archives significantly increased. In response to these changes TNA adjusted its

organisational structure in order to work more regionally as well as nationally. Regional engagement managers were appointed for four geographically defined regions; one for the West, which included the South West and West Midlands, one for the East, which included the East and South East and Lincolnshire, one for the North, who covered the historic north of Trent area and a separate engagement manager for London. Prior to 2011 TNA had worked and interacted with many archives on an institutional basis. However, following TNA's reorientation as sector leader, TNA began to work increasingly with archives as collections. This meant working more closely with museums and universities – organisations that may not be archives in their own right, but who hold substantial archives in their collections.

TNA notably had less contact with university archives prior to 2011 with the exception of a number of universities which had been appointed as Places of Deposit for public records. The introduction of the HEAP programme has significantly enhanced TNA's understanding of university archives and created new lines of communication between them. The introduction of new human resources in the shape of TNA's regional engagement managers is also significant. Dr Matt Greenhall, now head of Academic Engagement for TNA (previously the Engagement Manager for West region) discussed TNA's introduction of regional engagement managers:

"...it changed the way that we worked. The idea of having people on the ground was really to make sure that our leadership was proactive, seeing challenges and opportunities for the sector from the ground, and we had to make sure that policy and strategy reflected the real life experiences of the sector. So the change was quite a big deal and helped us to keep pace with a rapidly changing landscape."

Regional engagement managers provided the opportunity for TNA to develop more grounded leadership practice for archives as well as being able to focus on the regionally specific needs of archives

Research and evaluation

The *Guide to collaboration between the archive and higher education sectors* produced by TNA offers grounded advice for archive professionals.

TNA highlight the fact that archive services have a great deal to offer universities in terms of student employability and experience. Many archives also have strong links to their local communities through public engagement activities. As such, TNA encourage archives to act as equal partners rather than service providers and recognises that projects should benefit the archive as well as the academic.

The Guide recognises that making the initial contact is one of the most difficult elements of establishing a partnership and notes that cultural differences between the higher education and archive sectors can be significant, particularly in terms of motivation and the evaluation of impact. Where archive services measure their activities as a way of benchmarking performance and demonstrating value for money, universities tend to be assessed in terms of teaching or research excellence.

For TNA, embedding collaboration within organisations can be challenging because it requires shifting a relationship from individuals (fragile and high risk) to organisations. Greater stability of relationships is seen as being of benefit.

TNA is also looking to undertake research on citation of archives in academic papers. The publication of this research is pending and when published will be relevant to how the contribution of museum collections might be better accounted for in academic research.

Finally, TNA is undertaking research into the drivers for collecting archival material amongst higher education organisations and how these have changed with developments within the research and academic landscapes.

The Membership Organisation: The Cultural Capital Exchange (TCCE)

How are they funded? TCCE are a membership organization. However, they have also received project specific funding from national funders including Arts Council England and the Higher Education Funding Council for England.

Do they exist specifically to foster university / cultural sector partnerships or is it part of a wider portfolio or work? Their primary focus is university/cultural sector partnerships.

Do they fund partnerships? Yes, TCCE have previously supported small partnerships projects through seed funding but since 2012 they have led the Knowledge Exchange Programme for Creativeworks London and have, through that, supported 109 projects.

Do they research or evaluate partnerships? Yes.

Do they actively broker partnerships? Yes, though their work on Creativeworks London, their own networking and public events, and also through their new national pilot initiative - The Exchange.

Do they provide any kind of third space through events or online networks? Yes - TCCE regularly facilitate networking events.

Have they produced any advice or guidance on partnership working? TCCE have produced hard copy publications on their findings and experience of working in HEI collaborations including *A New STEAM Age* considering the discrepancy in support for Arts and Humanities research as opposed to Science and Technology Engineering and Mathematics subjects and *THEN:NOW* reflecting on TCCE's experiences of collaborative practice between 2005-2015. They have also produced two small publications called *Partnerships in Practice*.

TCCE is a membership organisation for HEIs. However, TCCE differs in several key areas from UMG. TCCE mobilises its activities through a dynamic network of individuals and organisations that includes academics, small and large scale cultural and creative businesses and individual practitioners. TCCE has a core network of 14 universities that include Russell Group members, specialist colleges such as University of the Arts London and the Guildhall, and post '92 universities.

TCCE also has network members from its work with Creativeworks London (CWL), one of the four AHRC Knowledge Exchange Hubs for the cultural and creative industries. TCCE leads the delivered Knowledge Exchange Programme for CWL. This includes two residency schemes, a creative vouchers scheme and a follow-on fund entitled BOOST. TCCE recently began a two year pilot project supported by Arts Council England (ACE) and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) entitled The Exchange. This a national network for researchers, artists and creative industries with the ambition to 'develop mutually beneficial relationships and break down barriers to collaboration' (TCCE; 2016). The project offers seed funding grants of up to £5,000 for 30 collaborative research projects. TCCE also facilitates an early career researcher network and has connections with several Independent Research Organisations including the V&A, Tate and the British Library. Whilst TCCE does not draw direct public funds to support its core operations, specific projects are supported by funders such as HEFCE and ACE.

The organisation now called TCCE was originally established as the London Centre for Arts and Cultural Exchange (LCACE) in 2004 as a two year pilot project funded through HEFCE's Higher Education Innovation Funding (HEIF) stream. The pilot project was run through six partner universities in London, each of which established a staff resource in their institution, mainly under the title Cultural Development Manager (CDM). CDMs would predominantly enter the institution from a practitioner and/or industry background rather than from academia. CDMs worked within their institutions to develop networks and activities that crossed from the academy into cultural and creative industries through mechanisms such as networking and showcase events.

By the time that LCACE was established, many universities had already engaged in 'technology transfer' with science and technology industries, primarily via STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering and maths) and had experience of securing significant financial and other benefits through these activities. Initially HEIs were, at least in part, motivated by the prospect of similar rewards from working with the cultural and creative industries; an expectation that would not be realised in the same way at all. Creative industries do bring a wide range of resources, networks, and experience to collaborative working but there were less opportunities for financial sponsorship and funding support of the kind more traditionally associated with large-scale industry.

LCACE continued its activities following the two year pilot and in 2010/2011 LCACE transitioned to TCCE and became independent from Kings College London (KCL). During the same time universities were experiencing a period of uncertainty, as they came under the scrutiny of 2010-2015 coalition government. Although TCCE as an organisation ceased to be formally administered by KCL, it remained a founding member of TCCE. The learning of the NCCPE and Share Academy, along with other existing literature, has indicated difficulties around maintaining ongoing connections with HEIs when lead academics move on to new institutions. A vital part of TCCE's work has been to keep track of where previous participants have moved to and keep connections up to date and relevant. As Evelyn Wilson the director of TCCE explains:

"As a small organisation we are able to tread relatively deeply within those (HEI) organisations... We have key contacts within each university, but we also work with individual academics. We are also quite proactive at finding people, we track people down and invite them to participate in many key aspects of our work."

The networks now associated with TCCE might be described as more organic than formal, with an emphasis on connections between people and supported by common interest.

TCCE has delivered hundreds of events, including its annual conference and the annual *Inside Out* Festival, a public festival showcasing the work of its member institutions and collaborators. TCCE also curates a series of small scale events, under the series title 'Impossible Partnerships' designed to create the potential for new collaborative activities to happen between academic and no-academic partners. The organisation uses its website as a platform to disseminate resources, including an archive of research reports from previous projects, podcasts and videos from events and TCCE publications.

Research and evaluation

TCCE have published their research and findings in a hard copy format with reflective essays from key individuals, allowing for the circulation of discussion and comment and to present a plurality of experience across academic and non-academic collaborators, including discussion points on economy, education, social justice and geography.

One key message supported by TCCE is that change '*almost always happens in small steps, in a consensual, slow, bottom-up manner*' and that top down interventions often prove less effective (Leighton and Mitchell 2015). Challenges to partnership working include the difficulties posed when small organisations (lean and fleet of foot) partner with universities, which can be inflexible and risk averse. A mismatch in expectations in terms of project outcomes and timescales for delivery are also cited.

On the positive side, TCCE notes that collaborative working gives both sides of the partnership increased visibility and access to new funding models and makes the value of each partner more palpable.

Forging relationships between higher education and the creative sector is acknowledged as taking enormous amounts of energy and the careful cultivation of networks. The provision of neutral spaces where people can meet and exchange ideas are seen as an important part of the process. The role of facilitators or brokers is also identified as important because they understand both worlds and are able to design events which encourage the formation of new relationships.

TCCE identify that until relatively recently the lion's share of public investment has gone into the 'technology push' rather than focussing on arts and creativity. This, coupled with the focus on promoting STEM subjects, has been at the expense of the wider cultural sector. Knowledge transfer between higher education and the arts is seen as an 'engine for innovation' stimulating new thinking and new ways of understanding creativity, and ensuring its spillover into other sectors as appropriate.

The Research Programme: Connected Communities

How are they funded? AHRC funded.

Do they exist specifically to foster university / cultural sector partnerships or is it part of a wider portfolio or work? Yes, between academics and community heritage partners.

Do they fund partnerships? Yes, funding is via application to the Connected Communities Programme and must be made by the academic partner.

Do they research or evaluate partnerships? Yes, publications on the projects Connected Communities have supported are available on their website.

Do they actively broker partnerships? No. They provide information about academics interested in partnership working on their website but no active brokering.

Do they provide any kind of third space through events or online networks? Yes, they facilitate showcase events for their projects.

Have they produced any advice or guidance on partnership working? Connected Communities provides advice on how to achieve successful partnerships on their website and additional resources can be found on their YouTube site and SlideShare archive available online.

Connected Communities is an AHRC funded research programme with a remit to help "...understand the changing nature of communities in their historical and cultural contexts and the role of communities in sustaining and enhancing our quality of life." (Connected Communities; 2016.)

The Connected Communities programme incentivises collaboration between academics and community partners (CPs) via a multi-million pound research programme that has, to date, funded over 280 collaborative projects between academics and CPs. Connected Communities supports a series of research themes including health and wellbeing, creative and digital communities, civil society and social innovation, environment and sustainability, heritage, diversity and dissent and participatory arts. These themes may be organised in the form of networks, promoting more targeted discussion and activities within the wider programme.

The research programme is supported by the resource of two dedicated 'leadership fellows' - senior academics funded by the AHRC to promote and develop activities within the Connected Communities programme alongside their own research interests. Though Connected Communities' directive is to work with CPs rather than directly with museums, there are multiple intersections with museums and museum professionals and professional networks. These include a one-year research project 'All our Stories' investigating the needs of community heritage groups and reflecting on the practices of collecting, classification and study at the Science Museum London (Connected Communities 2015). As well as generating a series of public outputs the project also generated translational learning for academic and museum professionals. An extract from the project summary states:

"The projects also showed the potential to generate understanding and the production of new and alternative knowledges which can help us with creating more inclusive and creative exhibitions, displays and interpretation."

Alongside the provision of funding for individual research projects Connected Communities curates an annual festival showcasing activities and providing a platform for networking and discussion. In addition the Connected Communities Heritage Network has curated three network symposium events, located in Leicester, Lincoln and Sheffield, inviting academics and CPs to present case studies and critical discussion around those to the network.

Although Connected Communities promotes partnerships of equivalence between academic and community partners, all applications for collaborative/ co-produced projects must be initiated by the academic partner.

Research and evaluation

Connected Communities has made a substantial number of publications available online including guidance documents for academics wishing to work with community and heritage partners. More specific publications on individual project findings, authored by the individual academic project leads, are also available.

Connected Communities have facilitated a 'Heritage Community Partner Legacy Workshop' for community partners to provide feedback on their experiences and give insight into the legacy of Connected Communities funded projects from the perspective of the CP. A publicly available report has been published outlining the CPs' response.

The report highlights several relevant key points. 'Cultural differences in communication and expectations' between universities and CPs were identified as an issue. Connected Communities also found that whilst some CPs felt they had the status of co-researcher in their project, others did not. The need for both academic and non-academic partners to understand that they are entering into a partnership of equivalence is a key concern for Share Academy, and the NCCPE and Share Academy have provided training and published guidance on how museums might more confidently interact with university partners.

The report also highlights concern around the sustainability of projects after the Connected Communities funding has come to an end. This ties into concerns around digital technologies, which seemed to be key to ensuring the legacy of many of the projects. Skills development for the CP was also felt to be a key legacy of partnership projects.

Conclusion

A detailed appraisal of these five strategic organisations generally confirms the findings from research and evaluation carried out by the NCCPE and Share Academy. Power imbalances between universities and their external partners are a common theme. All of the organisations identify the importance of entering into a partnership of equivalence with equal benefit for both partners.

The challenges and benefits of partnership working seem broadly similar whether the university is partnering with museums and archives, the wider cultural heritage sector, or creative industries. This indicates that skills and knowledge could be shared between the sectors to considerable advantage.

The fact that museums rely on local networks and that strategic direction comes almost entirely from university initiated activities or national institutions is significant and may contribute to the power balances identified in the research. It is also significant to note that the only non-academic funder supporting the activities of the five organisations is Arts Council England.

Each of the organisations recognises the challenges involved in making initial contact with a potential partner and the time and effort involved in kick starting new collaborations. The importance of networking opportunities, spaces where people can meet and exchange ideas and brokers, with a knowledge of both the higher education and cultural heritage sectors who can facilitate people coming together, is a theme which runs throughout the literature published by all five organisations.

While only a few of the organisations actually fund partnerships, the importance of funding is widely acknowledged and access to new funding models or sources of grant aid is cited as one of the main motivations for seeking cross sector partnerships. Another motivation for collaboration (particularly among small to medium sized cultural heritage organisations) is improved organisational sustainability, both economically and in terms of improved skills and resources.

In identifying some of the dynamic factors that have led the five organisations to research and/or facilitate cross-sector collaborations this research highlights the benefits of being receptive to organic developments in organisational practices where they occur. Flexibility, responsiveness and fleetness of foot have enabled the five organisations to respond to changing economic and social landscapes to wider benefit.

Authorship

The main author of this report is Katie Dent, research assistant within the Share Academy research team led by Judy Willocks and Helen Chatterjee and including researcher Chiara Bonacchi. Judy Willcocks also contributed to the authorship of the report.

ⁱ In many cases information on projects will still be available in online repositories. However, it is less likely to be used to illustrate journal articles, conference presentations or be referenced in social media long after the fact.

ⁱⁱ Dr Comunian had also previously received funding through the AHRC Knowledge Transfer Fellowship scheme. This funding stream ended in 2011.

ⁱⁱⁱ Tonya Nelson and Sally MacDonald, UMG, have also co-authored chapter “A Space for Innovation and Experimentation: University Museums as Test Beds for New Digital Technologies” *in* A Handbook for Academic Museums: Beyond Exhibitions and Education. MuseumEtc: Edinburgh, UK.

^{iv} LMA was abolished in 2011 as part of the then coalition government’s aims to reduce the number of public bodies funded by government.

References and Links

Share Academy

<http://www.londonmuseumsgroup.org/share-academy/>

National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement

<https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/>

https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/supi_project_report_final.pdf

Beyond the Creative Campus

<http://www.creative-campus.org.uk/>

<http://www.creative-campus.org.uk/final-report---beyond-the-creative-campus.html>

University Museums Group

<http://universitymuseumsgroup.org/>

<http://universitymuseumsgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/UMG-ADVOCACY-single.pdf>

The National Archives

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/the-higher-education-archive-programme.htm>

http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/archives/Guide_for_archives_to_collaborate_with_Higher_Education.pdf

The Culture Capital Exchange

A New Steam Age: Challenging the STEM Agenda in Research, edited Suzie Leighton and Peter Mitchell, published by The Culture Capital Exchange Ltd. 2015.

<http://www.theculturecapitalexchange.co.uk/>

Connected Communities (Arts and Humanities Research Council)

<https://connected-communities.org/>

https://connected-communities.org/index.php/project_resources/heritage-community-partner-legacy-workshop-report/

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