

## Museum-University Partnership Initiative Final Report Template

*Please see the report guidelines for further detail*

### Your project participants

#### **Dress and Textiles Network: Heritage and creative practice in the West Midlands**

Project lead: Dr Fiona Hackney, Professor Fashion Theory University of Wolverhampton

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Project partners:

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### Other Participants

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Tom Hicks library: Arts: University of Wolverhampton, developing special collection Black Country Lives, Culture and Heritage - [T.J.Hicks@wlv.ac.uk](mailto:T.J.Hicks@wlv.ac.uk)

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Helen Taylor, Curator of Domestic & Cultural Life, Black Country Living Museum, [helen.taylor@bclm.com](mailto:helen.taylor@bclm.com)

## Progressing the partnership

What is the current status of your partnership?

**Project aims and objectives:** This is a scoping project to identify and establish the potential for a network of partnerships linking dress and textile local heritage collections with contemporary practice, makers, and arts education, which in the longer term can enable local heritage collections to be enablers of contemporary practice.

**Project Activities:** A series of co-ordinated visits between partners to explore collections and resources, identify priority needs, have curators visit Fashion and Textiles staff and students at Wolverhampton University, followed by assessment of potential areas of collaboration, developmental thinking, and scope for future collaboration.

Drawing on the network and related contacts, including those provided by Rachel Lambert Jones, Prof Hackney was joined by Dr Baines, De Montfort University to visit the dress, fashion and textiles collections housed in partner museums and archives including: Herefordshire Museum Service, Walsall: Hodson Shop and related collections and Walsall Leather Museum, Herbert Gallery Coventry, Black Country Living Museum. This enabled us to see the rich material available for research and creative practice in these collection in the region and develop face to face contact with curators etc.

Professor Hackney organised a final knowledge exchange event in the Fashion Lab, Fashion & Textiles Dept. University of Wolverhampton in 15 December 2017. It was attended by around 20 participants (see list above) and brought together representatives from museums with a rich, but underused, array of dress and textile heritage resources with university researchers, lecturers, students and fashion practitioners. The day consisted of a mixture of presentation, creative making and object investigation as curators, staff and students brought samples of their own work and from their collections.

Jan Wrigley: Tour of Fashion and Textiles Dept.

Tom Hicks: 1960s exhibition/display using University library and staff collections

Fiona Hackney: Welcome and outline of the aims of the event

Althea Mackenzie: Dress and Textiles in the Hereford Archives Collection

Claire Anderson: Textiles at Hereford College of Art

Ali Wells: Dress and Textiles at the Herbert Gallery, Coventry

Michael Glasson: Walsall Leather Museum

Catherine Lister: The Hodson Shop Collection, Walsall

Catherine Howard: MA Student University of Wolverhampton: researching stitching and textiles

Ruth Singer: Criminal Quilts project

Georgina Grant: Dress/costume at Ironbridge

Mary Coleman: Lace guild

Mapping Shared Interests and Future Collaborations

The end of the day provided a unique opportunity for brainstorming and knowledge

exchange with a view to developing collaborative research funding bids and other forms of collaboration. This resulted in 11 emergent themes and research responses:

**1: Education, heritage/archives and creative/cultural industries discourse:** a central organising theme that maps into ambitions for HEIs and could help built value through links with education, business and museum/archive/collections.

**Research response:** Develop clear routes for connecting archives with the curriculum via contemporary interest in creative/cultural industries, embedded in heritage of place (education, industry, rural economy etc.). Use of co-production methods (and methodology) in teaching. Historic innovation catalyst for contemporary innovation (Jo Bloodworth, Fashion Lab). AHRC network bid.

**2: University Archive/collection and educational offer (possible hub): Black Country Lives:** archive collection developing at UoW: social history, visual arts, literature, industrial heritage, photo archives – link with current practice.

**Research response:** Tom Hicks: library and archive; Ross Prior: Ironbridge

**3: Network link similar resources:** one example is shop/retail collections: Phyllis collection and Hodson, Walsall, haberdashery shop at Black Country Living Museum, and contents of a chemists shop.

**Research response:** link with Laura Ugolini and CHORD network. FH interest in this area: possible bid, research student project.

**4: Memory and the everyday dress/textiles:** memory and reminiscence work, school groups and research. Added value in terms of engagement (needs to be evidenced/memory and impact)

**Research response:** ongoing importance of the everyday as a prompt/catalyst/provocation for memory. Laura Ugolini conference at UoW in June, Ruth Singer presenting. Memory and the everyday to engage popular audiences in archives and arts/material culture/engagement and also students for creative projects and engagement with historical material (see Hackney et al 2016).

**5: Museum on the Move: the travelling archive:** take the archive to the people/students: a set of movable resources that can ‘pop up’ at a range of different events/contexts including community events, schools and HE. This could link in with ‘Live Briefs’ for fashion, textiles, graphics, illustration, photography students (see Jo Bloodworth Fashion Lab). Responds to and challenges the shrinking resource in museums and archives. Linked to digital resource.

**Research response:** small funding pot to run a pilot and start developing - pop up trolley/van etc.. Sam Hope and team could support? Also links into the dissemination and display (movable) exhibition stands that we will be developing for the current S4S project at UoW.

**6: Textile and dress historians: courses: linking history, theory and practice:** From across the country and internationally. Link into local/national/international network

**Research response:** Dress history courses are limited – University of Brighton, and Central St Martins. FH in contact with team at University of Brighton as advisor at their recent validation event, and also external examiner for PhDs for them. Seek advice from them

about how they use their collection at Brighton and how we might adapt this to a plan/strategy for utilising archives at UoW, De Montfort, and Hereford College of Arts. Feeds into AHRC network bid. Steph Mellini current project for PG cert.

**7: Copyright and business:** Important to bear in mind to catalyse archival collections and design work (and processes) made in response to them.

**Research response:** explore existing case studies as examples of learning and good practice – Nottingham Trent, Glasgow School of Art, Others? Is there good practice here within sphere of museums, archives and collections? Explore. This would be an essential component of any project intending to monetise collections. It also seems an important approach for archives and collections who need to raise revenue. Could be component of possible funding bid exploring archives as catalyst for business etc.

**8: Doctoral research:** preliminary research to date has revealed the rich resources in local archives which represent a ready source for primary research and making ‘new contributions to the field of study’ which is the requisite for doctoral research. Under-researched areas include: Patterns, dyes/colours – links with science (Hodson and Herbert), Silk Ribbon collection Herbert, Coventry – design development, impact on fashion/consumption. Costume – Herefordshire. New approaches to HE projects, creative interpretation etc.

**Research response:** Catherine Howard possible research project with Ribbon archive, Coventry. Costume – Herefordshire etc (Stephanie Mellini). Also undergrad student projects and Masters students.

**9: Artist led projects:** Museums and independent artists don’t have access to academic resources. Artists are in a good position to liaise between HE and archives, through creative interpretation participatory projects.

**Research response:** Ruth Singer’s current Arts Council funded Criminal Quilts project is an ideal case study to explore this. Jan Wrigley and a number of students (Catherine Howard for instance) are also working on this. The project includes a proposed symposium (some MTP funds support) workshop(s) to discuss how artists might be trained to work with archives/curators, head up student work-placements, evidence value, insure sustainability etc.

**10: Future Proofing; mapping, knowledge and skills:** Future-proofing skills: for making historical costumes, craft skills: Trapunto quilting and contemporary practice, for instance. Map where knowledge is. Blists Hill – Future proofing skills

**Research response:** Possible link with Heritage Crafts Association (HCA) – their current research list of endangered skills. Tom Fisher Nottingham Trent – input into AHRC network bid re skills. Perhaps develop list of textiles skills/techniques? This might be part of a PhD project? Costume skills: BCLM: S4S project, and Blists Hill.

**11: MUPI Network in Midlands:** maintain links with other groups MUPI in East Midlands etc.

**Research response:** Tom at Nottingham Trent. Emily Baines De Montfort and others include in AHRC Network bid. Midlands hub for connecting place-based heritage, HE and

business/cultural and creative industries (see forthcoming chapter in edited collection on Craft Business Hackney et al for Routledge, 2018).

**Conclusion:** We propose the development of the network incrementally through a series of catalysing creative projects, initiatives and events - nodes of activity in the network (Latour) - that will build capacity on the ground through impact. These nodes of activity might include, for instance: externally funded collaborative research bids, doctoral research projects, co-produced student projects embedded in the HE curriculum, independent artist initiatives (including training resources), 'pop up' interactive display kits. Networked together and with an increasing range of co-produced resources, HE providers, museums, archives, collections and local businesses might serve as movable 'hubs' of activity that can inform, supply, support each other from a position of expertise and strength.

If your objectives have changed since you started working together please tell us more:

The objectives have not changed but the network has expanded through contacts and connections made during this MUPI pilot mapping and connecting stage. We still retain the primary idea of place-based heritage and creative working and see this as the basis for building strong connections, partnerships and reciprocal working elsewhere :

Beyond the West Midlands, nationally and internationally:

links with related East Midlands fashion and textile courses at De Montfort University and Nottingham Trent University Midlands, and archives and collections Framework Knitting Museum, John Smedley etc. Midlands Hub of interactive activity.

Textile Stories, Chester University – Hackney, Bloodworth and Wrigley attending event in Shrewsbury, invite participation for AHRC Network bid.

Links with existing projects to build value: Ruth Singer Criminal Quilts Stafford (staff and students at UoW work on);

Prof Hackney new AHRC project Designing a Sensibility for Sustainable Clothing: includes working with BCLM and also Lace Guild;

International links: Prof Hackney AHRC project Maker-Centric (<https://makercentric.wordpress.com>) exploring making and place-based heritage - international contact Terra Vera, Slovenia – link up heritage crafts/skills and design.

Are all the original partners still involved?

Yes

Have you secured any additional resources or funding to enable you to continue with your project?

A number of funding bids are in process including:  
AHRC Network funding bid (up to £45,000)  
European funding bid Marie Curie Fellowship (up to £120,000)  
CUIP.

### **Looking ahead**

What are your plans for the partnership over the next 6 months?

Three areas: **1) publication 2) project funding bids 3) consolidate and expand the network** with visits to additional partner archives collections:

#### **1) Publication:**

An article in the form of a discussion developed from the knowledge exchange event has been accepted for publication in *Journal of Textile Research & Practice* (Routledge) 2018. It is conceived as a version of the artist interview format (6,000 w). Discussion chaired by Prof Hackney and includes contributions from: Claire Anderson, Head Textiles Hereford College of Art, Curator Althea McKenzie, artist Ruth Singer (Criminal Quilts), Catherine Howard MA Design & Applied Arts Student UoW, Ali Wells, Curator Herbert Gallery, Jo Bloodworth and Jan Wrigley, Fashion and Textiles tutors UoW, and Dr Emily Baines, heritage interpretation and fashion business, De Montfort University, Leicester, and Catherine Lister Hodson Shop collection.

#### **Abstract: Making Value: Catalysing Fashion and Textiles Heritage in the Midlands**

There are well over a hundred small museums, archives and collections in the Midlands, a legacy of the region's rich industrial heritage. A surprising number of these include dress and textiles in various forms, from the specialist costume collection of Charles Paget-Wade at Berrington Hall, to intricately stitched smocks made by local needlewomen in Herefordshire, and the wealth of manufacturers' samples that comprise the silk ribbon trade archive at the Herbert Museum, Coventry. These are challenging times for many such organisations as they face cut backs in staff and local authority funding, yet they offer a unique and largely unexploited resource to those of us in art and design higher education, not only for primary research but also as a catalyst for innovation in the cultural industries. The following discussion explores the possibilities and challenges involved in developing productive connections between museums, archives, collections, business, communities and HE. It proposes series of co-produced catalysing projects, initiatives, and events to build bespoke engagement, research, and learning resources.

The network will be scaled up to include national and international partners as it grows.

**2) Project funding bids:**

AHRC Network funding bid (up to £45,000) Prof Hackney, Dr Baines and Claire Anderson  
European funding bid Marie Curie Fellowship (up to £120,000) Prof Hackney.

**3) Continue to develop the local network (ongoing time permitting):**

Rachel Lambert Jones supplied additional contacts to:

Shugborough, Staffordshire - Helen [helen.johnson@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:helen.johnson@staffordshire.gov.uk)

- Gillian Crumpton [gillian.crumpton@ironbridge.org.uk](mailto:gillian.crumpton@ironbridge.org.uk)

Museums Worcestershire – Angie Bishop [abishop2@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:abishop2@worcestershire.gov.uk)

Warwick Museums – Michelle Alexander [michellealexander@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:michellealexander@warwickshire.gov.uk)

Hereford Resource Centre – Catherine Willson [cwillson@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:cwillson@herefordshire.gov.uk)

RSC - [geraldine.collinge@rsc.org.uk](mailto:geraldine.collinge@rsc.org.uk)

Shropshire Regimental – Christine Bernath [curator@shropshireregimentalmuseum.co.uk](mailto:curator@shropshireregimentalmuseum.co.uk)

RRF Stephanie Bennett [rffmuseum@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:rffmuseum@hotmail.co.uk)

Potteries Museum - Jean Milton [jean.milton@stoke.gov.uk](mailto:jean.milton@stoke.gov.uk)

Tamworth Castle – Louise Troman [Louise-Troman@tamworth.gov.uk](mailto:Louise-Troman@tamworth.gov.uk)

Back to Backs – Mukith Miah [Mukith.Miah@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:Mukith.Miah@nationaltrust.org.uk)

**Challenges and benefits**

Summarising your progress to date what do you feel have been the highlights?

Progress to date is summarised in the activities and outcomes outlined above. Given the small amount of funds and relatively short time we feel we have established an enormous amount in terms of: connections made and partnerships achieved, collaborative research themes and priorities identified, discrete targeted projects identified, the establishment of an overarching approach which emerged from shared discussion (and will feed into a co-written published article in a specialist academic journal on the topic of textiles research, practice, archives and HE). Network members who are in close geographic proximity to one another (Hereford College of Art and Herefordshire Museum Service, for instance, or UoW and Walsall Museum Service) find this a aid to partnership working (see case study below). But equally we are finding that our hyper-local working enables us to make meaningful contacts and build projects with like-minded organisations in other parts of the world, for instance, Slovenia.

The highlights of the project were 1) seeing the marvellous collections of dress and textiles in our local/regional archives/collections 2) meeting an inspiring group of colleagues in HE organisations, museums and collections 3) the stimulating discussion and ideas that emerged when they came together.

One challenge was dealing with the budget within an educational institution which does not have the flexibility to deal with smaller funded projects of this kind – it took an

inordinate amount of time to transfer funds to the partner organisation at Hereford, for instance. I know this is something that others leading projects also experienced.

Another challenge will I am sure be to keep these conversations going which is why we propose a scheme of smaller targeted projects, events, curricula development etc. which, where possible, will develop and extend partners' existing initiatives and ambitions, enabling them to drive them without creating additional work. These smaller projects will then incrementally build a larger resource that will be available to all members of the network.

A central resource (website) linked to MUPI nationally where we can make project resources/information available to the network as a whole would be really useful here (localised smaller networks within a national network).

## **Case Study**

This case study consists of **three** place-based examples of partnership working between HE design courses and archives/collections that suggest a range of ways in which these collaborations might be taken forward through discrete projects:

**Hereford College of Arts and The Hereford Museum & Art Gallery** have a long-standing and positive working relationship. Notably the BA (Hons) Textile Design course has object based learning with linked up visits to the costume and textiles archive at the Museum embedded within its structure ensuring students have the opportunity to interrogate historical textile objects for information about composition, techniques and materials. For example in October 2017 second year textile students visited the archive for inspiration from knitted costume and vintage knitwear patterns as part of their initial exploration for a new fashion knitwear module, and in November first year textile students visited the archive to draw from costume details as part of their textile design drawing module. Textile design students also regularly undertake work experience at the Museum & Art Gallery, which contributes to an assessed professional practice module. However the experience of both the archive team and the students is inconsistent and fluctuates from positive to negative depending on the individual student and their research skills.

Significantly through conversations initiated by the Dress and Textiles Network: Heritage and creative practice in the West Midlands MUPI it has been highlighted that there is great potential to develop more mutually beneficial projects between the Art College and Museum which focus on making the archive collection relevant within contemporary and future design projects by connectivity and knowledge sharing inclusive of other local cultural institutions and businesses.

Consequently colleagues across the Art College and Museum have committed to establishing a more structured programme of work experience where expectations are managed and research is linked directly to course content, student's specialisms and research interests. Colleagues within the Critical Studies department at Hereford College of Arts with experience of working with students and 'teaching' collections at larger institutions e.g. Goldsmiths University will work with the Textiles and Museum teams to



further develop the practice of object based learning ensuring that it is focused to fit into frameworks provided by educational professional practice modules equipping students with necessary research skills for employment and postgraduate study.

Collaborative forward facing projects that define heritage as a continuum of knowledge rather than something that has already happened are also being developed. Proposed projects include garment reconstruction where computer aided design (CAD) software at the College will be used by students to explore examples of costume details within the archive collection.

Both partners support the idea that craft, design and making can help facilitate social change. Therefore projects inclusive of local charities and diverse social groups with a focus on making and material literacy learnt from the archive -groups of objects to be set aside to handle, enabling hands on knowledge gain - are being finalised with the intention of introducing them to students during the next academic year (2018-19).

### **The Hodson Shop Collection, Herbert Museum Coventry, Walsall Leather Museum & University of Wolverhampton**

Jo Bloodworth Senior Lecturer Fashion Design at Wolverhampton University will work with Catherine Lister at the Hodson Shop Collection to construct and deliver a set of teaching resources, films, a pop-up event and hands on sessions with BA Fashion Design students in the University Fashion Lab. These resources will also be co-produced with students and will serve as a contemporary interpretation of the Needlework Development Scheme (NDS). This will be the first of several such events with local archives and resources embedding them into the teaching curriculum in significant and creative ways and simultaneously building teaching resources and collaborative work in the region.

As a result of the project Knowledge Exchange event in December, Catherine Howard, a current student specialising in fashion and textiles on the MA Applied Arts and Design course at the University is now collaborating with curator Ali Wells at The Herbert Museum, Coventry. Katherine will spend the summer working in the museum studying the Coventry Ribbon Archive with the intention that this will form the basis of her major project for her MA and ideally form the basis of a doctoral research project which she aims to develop at the University.

Professor Hackney will be working with the Leather Museum to develop an EU-funded Marie Curie Fellowship bid with Liza Foley (currently at National School of Art and Design Dublin) to explore the relationship between heritage, sustainability and contemporary design practices in hand-making and design fabrication. Professor Hackney will also be working with Dr Baines to submit the AHRC Network bid exploring local place-based heritage and contemporary, design practice, education and design economies. She will also be facilitating and compiling an article in *Journal of Textile Research & Practice* (Routledge) 2018 based on discussions from the project knowledge exchange event, and presenting a paper (with colleagues) on the project at the forthcoming AHRC conference on archives and communities at De Montfort University Leicester.

**Walsall Leather Museum collaboration with Emily Baines, De Montfort University:  
Walsall Museum Service and Dr Emily Baines, De Montfort University:**

An exhibition on Modernism and Everyday Dress, using Hodson Shop Collection garments and wider research material by Dr Emily Baines is planned, with collaboration between Dr Baines and Catherine Lister of the Walsall Museum Service. The exhibition is intended to be shown in the Walsall Leather Museum temporary exhibition rooms (date tbc).

A further collaboration with Mike Glasson of the Walsall Leather Museum is intended, to develop a journal paper on the Walsall leather industry. It would develop an industry lifecycle analysis of the industry, highlighting its current growth phase as an industry as the global centre of high-end saddlery and also of quality smaller bags, wallets, etc production on a business-to-business supply chain basis, based on an integrated cluster of small firms and workshops. This links the historical and current knowledge of the industry by Mike Glasson with the industry analysis and textile business history expertise of Dr Baines.

Please share photos illustrating the work your partnership is doing by emailing [maddy.foard@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:maddy.foard@uwe.ac.uk) and confirm that they are cleared for us to use in our publications and on our website.