



AHRC Podcast: Knowledge Exchange Conference

Audio slide show transcription

Narrator:

The first major conference of its kind in the UK on knowledge exchange in the arts and humanities has taken place at the University of Southampton. The aim was to look at how research can make an impact beyond the academy. Bringing together people from higher education, the heritage sector, creative industries and the performing arts, knowledge exchange also has a strong emphasis on encouraging public engagement activity.

Catherine Clarke is a Professor in the English Department at Southampton. She is also the Director of the 'Discover Medieval Chester Knowledge Transfer Fellowship, funded by the AHRC, a project that very much encapsulates the knowledge exchange approach. This conference was organised by Catherine as part of her Fellowship.

Catherine Clarke:

I think what we're becoming more and more alert to as researchers is that it's through those collaborations and exchanges beyond the academy that we can bring new perspectives, new material, new ideas, new approaches into our own research. Now I think the emphasis on knowledge exchange acknowledges that bi-lateral exchange that both the non-academic partner and the wider community and the researchers are gaining new ideas, new approaches through this kind of creative collaboration.

Narrator:

The knowledge exchange approach has fed into all aspects of Catherine's research. It's having an impact far beyond the original project.

Catherine Clarke:

Our work on Medieval Chester, our initial research was primarily targeted at an academic audience, now we're bringing that to the wider community through a website, through a major exhibition at the Grosvenor Museum in Chester through a permanent public art work in the centre of the City of Chester, we're reaching new audiences in new ways. One particular element of that project that I think really exemplifies exchange and collaboration is the artwork that we produced as part of that project, in collaboration with the artist Nayan Kulkarni. This was a lighting installation at St. John's ruins in Chester that took fragments of the medieval manuscripts and texts we'd worked with and projected them over the ruins. Now that's had all kinds of great results and consequences for the community in Chester,

the Council put in matched funding, it's enabled them to regenerate a site within the City, it has formed the basis for a new public art strategy within the City, a new policy on public realm spaces. It's had a big impact in terms of visitor interest and interest in the local community but it's also taken me in new directions in my own research. So, thinking about this opposition between textual fragments and the material fragments of the architecture of the ruins at St John's has led me into thinking in new ways about the ruin, the ruin as a tool for recovering the past as a way into thinking about the past.

Narrator:

One of the speakers at the conference was Matthew Dodd, Head of Speech Programmes and Presentation at BBC Radio 3. Matthew works with the AHRC on the New Generation Thinkers Scheme which finds academics in the early stages of their career who have the potential to turn their ideas into creative broadcasts. Matthew feels the initiative is a great example of knowledge exchange in action not only in the way it has opened up academic areas to a wider audience but also because it often leads to new ways of looking at subjects

Matthew Dodd:

What we've managed to do is open a window on some very fascinating research that people have done. One of the things we do with the New Generation Thinkers is that they all come to our *Free Thinking Festival of Ideas* at Radio 3's annual audience festival and they give a fifteen minute talk. In our first year one of the first New Generation Thinkers, Corin Throsby from the University of Cambridge, gave a talk about the work she'd been doing on the fan mail that was sent to Lord Byron. She was talking about how actually the concept of fandom and celebrity had had some of its roots in the experience about Lord Byron. Now, anyone listening to that talk would understand what she was talking about from our own contemporary perspective. It was entertaining, it was fascinating, it was surprising. That was just one small fifteen minute talk, but it's trying to get close to the research, because that's something that I'm particularly keen on which is to allow us to try in broadcasting, in our arts programmes in our history programmes, in our philosophy programmes to get close to the latest work that people are doing so that we don't find ourselves always falling back on things that we learnt at university as producers, or that we picked up from somewhere else.

Narrator:

Delegates at the conference related their experiences of knowledge exchange:

Comments from delegates:

My name is Laura King, I work on a project called *Arts Engaged* at the University of Leeds, I did an AHRC funded PhD project on the *History of Fatherhood in Britain*. Knowledge exchange to me is one way in which we can engage with external partners. It's an opportunity to think about who we can work with and how we can share knowledge that universities have but also learn from external partners in really exciting and meaningful ways.

I'm Anna Groundwater I'm a historian, early modern historian working on an AHRC funded project in English literature at the University of Edinburgh *Ben Johnson's*

walk to Scotland in 1618. Not only are we getting our stuff out beyond, but we're getting response from other practitioners, non-academic practitioners and also from the wider public that feeds back into our project and helps us think about it, the research in different ways. It's been hugely exciting working like this.

I'm Simon Moreton and I'm the Knowledge Exchange Fellow for the REACT Hub in Bristol. REACT is one of four knowledge exchange hubs for the creative economy funded by the AHRC. Knowledge exchange to me is a two-way process that explores the multiple different ways of unlocking value from different kinds of knowledge. So, that values equally the kind of critical approaches that academics may bring, the deep knowledge and the information they may have from their research, but also the values, the different kinds of performative or ingenious inventive entrepreneurial knowledge of the creative economy as well.

My name is Sue Hughes, I'm the Museum Director for Cheshire West Museums working on a knowledge exchange programme with a range of universities and from my point of view it's been important to get that knowledge and expertise from the academic partners. My role has really been to interpret and animate that knowledge in terms of exhibitions, story-telling, talks, tours, and different ways of making that knowledge accessible to more people and to different audiences with different learning styles.

I'm Sally Taylor and I'm the Executive Director of the Culture Capital Exchange, a membership organisation of ten, London universities working across the spectrum of knowledge exchange, impact and public engagement. Knowledge exchange for me is very much about the porous nature of universities, about the way that academics engage with the real world not only with their research but also with the way that they collaborate with non-academic organisations. It has been very interesting to see over the history of the Culture Capital Exchange how the tide has very much come in our direction in that respect, how more academics completely understand that knowledge exchange can work not just for their research and their teaching but actually to enhance their own personal view of the world.