



## **Knowledge Exchange Hubs - One Year In**

### **Podcast Transcript**

VO: Since their launch in 2011, the Arts and Humanities Research Council's four Knowledge Exchange Hubs have been busy helping academia and the creative industries work more effectively together, sharing knowledge and experience and generating exciting new economic opportunities. Converging on the Lancaster Institute for Contemporary Arts in September 2013, around a hundred delegates from PhD students to Knowledge Exchange Hub directors gathered to discuss their experiences so far and investigate where knowledge exchange might be going in the future. Leon Cruickshank, a Reader in Design at Lancaster University's design research lab explains the thinking behind The Knowledge Exchange two day interactive conference...

LC: Knowledge exchange has a long way to go in terms of being developed. This conference is about raising the level of debate explicitly about knowledge exchange. I'm an interaction designer, and I designed human-to-human interaction. I really design knowledge exchange and the design of knowledge exchange is a new emerging area. So we're using this conference as a test bed for some quite radical approaches to designing knowledge exchange and designing a conference. Part of my life as an academic scholar - design philosophy, quite niche, but I test those ideas out by working with real people and the power of moving between those two worlds, the synergy is absolutely fantastic. So I'm looking for more people to discover a way to using that kind of synergy.

VO: In developing this synergy between the creative business sector and academia, the UK's four Knowledge Exchange Hubs have already started connecting leading research with a range of creative and cultural organisations. Professor Rachel Cooper is the Principal-Investigator for the Creative Exchange hub, which brings together Lancaster University, Newcastle University and the Royal College of Art. One of the highlights so far for the Creative Exchange Hub has been its work with the Digital Fiction Factory, a creative partnership between the BBC, Channel Four and Creative England.

RC: They wanted a creative writer to work with small digital companies who were producing content across platforms for the BBC and I asked a creative writing academic if he'd get involved and he was a bit apprehensive, not particularly interested, it wasn't his area. He went and worked with those companies it really was successful and he's really changed his idea about trans-media writing and that will inform his courses, his further research and he will continue to work in that area, so that's a really interesting... the company's got something out of it because they got the content for their experiments across media, and he had changed his mindset about what was happening in the industry and how that affected creative writing, so that's really interesting knowledge exchange.

VO: Creative Works London is led by Queen Mary University of London and its 38 partners range from the Central School of Speech and Drama to the School of Oriental and African Studies. Under its director Morag Shiach, the partnership has celebrated some major successes during the first two years of Knowledge Exchange hubs. Bringing innovation and creative opportunities together through its Ideas Pool has also generated important collaborations.

MS: So one we did was on the idea of localities, on being in the right place at the right time, which for SMEs in London is incredibly important because they have to decide where they're going to locate, what the benefits might be of being beside other businesses like them or in fact in a completely different space, and they brought us a series of projects which we've been able to support based on regeneration on understanding the way in which cultural practice can facilitate broader kinds of urban regeneration, and I think that's a really interesting example of bringing together different kinds of expertise around project.

VO: Heading to Scotland, Professor Georgina Follett is the Deputy Principal for Knowledge Exchange at the University of Dundee and is the Principal-Investigator and Director of Design in Action. Established one year on from the launch of the Knowledge Exchange hubs, Design in Action enjoys over 30 agencies and industrial partners.

GF: As of yesterday, I think we had seven hundred individuals registered with Design in Action, and over 470 businesses, and we now need to look at alternative mechanisms of managing success if you like and getting everybody else in the university to understand the need and make the systems sufficiently flexible to deliver this new product which is engagement.

VO: With his background in video and digital art, Professor Jonathan Dovey is well placed to see how the creative industries have changed over the last 30 years, with people now enjoying unprecedented access to digital media and distribution. As Director of REACT - Research and Enterprise in Arts and Creative Technologies - the west country's Knowledge Exchange hub, Jonathan believes that all of these Knowledge Exchange success

stories are dependent on a great deal of effort - and design - to make sure that the very process of bringing minds together delivers meaningful collaborations.

JD: I think what is essential about knowledge exchange is it should be a genuine collaboration, and genuine collaborations are based upon shared excitement, passion and trust. So I think it's important to engineer and design spaces and networks in which trust, passion and collaboration can happen. That will not happen if you just chuck everybody in a room and say "we're all going to have a great time together." If you want to design a space or a network where people will trust one another, collaborate and be creative with one another that is not an easy task. You have to work at that, that requires skill, it requires producers, it requires expertise, it requires knowledge, it's to just something that comes up with the weather.

VO: So it would appear that the UK's Knowledge Exchange Hubs for the Creative Economy are already delivering some significant achievements. In addition to its celebration of success, much is being learned about what works and what doesn't - something the September 2011 Creative Exchange Interactive Conference set out to capture.

DELEGATE: "...beep, beep, beep, Radar, Collabradar... basically we're working on the premise of we need a catalyst for interaction, for things to happen, communication, and may be one of the things stopping us is fear. The unknown and introductions and putting ourselves out there, so building on the much used Gaydar application...."

DELEGATE: "...this is a slight distraction, but not really... I mean we run something for our Phd students, which I'm sure lots of other places do which is called Junk The Jargon, which is where they have to compete with each other to present their research in a way that is available to someone outside of the discipline, and exciting and interesting, I think there's quite a lot of that going on..."

DELEGATE: "...they have different clocks for instance in terms of product development, the industry would take much less time to develop the product or..."

ACTUALITY: "I'll put the microphone away and we'll do a little exercise. And I propose that we start with beautiful weather, it's really great, and birds are chirping - go ahead, everybody, softly..."  
(delegates mimic birdsong)

GF: I'm energised by a conference that is not a conference, that what we're seeing is everybody having an equal voice, we're seeing knowledge exchange in action. There is a willingness of all the participants to contribute to a wider future.

ACTUALITY: "...personal development is that interesting?"

ACTUALITY: "... behaviour, is that about language?" "No, it's about being..."

DELEGATE: I have taken away a lot of different perspectives on my own research, about language and using metaphors as a form of communication and expression, so Ive been very surprised, people have been coming up to me and I've been meeting people I've never met before from different perspectives talking about the

same thing so that's been really great, and we've had so many opportunities to have these informal talks and it's been so valuable.

DELEGATE: We've just had a fascinating conversation about how to make things happen, how to actually get over the process of discussion - I sort of ended up on an inspirational point about DIY and not always waiting around for funding but actually getting out there and bringing things together.

VO: So after a packed first day at the Creative Exchange Interactive Conference just how would all of this debate and discussion be incorporated into the work of the Knowledge Exchange hubs in the future? As conference designer and co-host Leon Cruickshank explains, all of this new understanding wouldn't be wasted.

LC: Tomorrow morning we're going to be drawing this new understanding and developing a manifesto for knowledge exchange. We don't want this manifesto to be a Ten Commandments because that would be very crude, so there won't be ten rules. We're going to be exploring eight focuses for knowledge exchange and for each of those to have sixty examples. Then we'll have a really nuanced exploration of what it means to go inside those points.

GF: "...one of the things we all use in academia is glass walls, we keep ourselves in very nice boxes, we're comfortable, and we like working amongst our colleagues, we've got plenty of students, we've got plenty of interactions, we don't get out enough, and we need to make change, and I'm fed up of working in an environment that is arcane I think, so bow the system, and let's rethink how we do things. Thank you."