

The role of Library Services in the collaborative development of research repository and research data management at University of the Arts London

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Research activity at the university

University of the Arts London is Europe's largest specialist arts and design university, drawing together six colleges with international reputations in art, design, fashion, communication and performing arts. The constituent colleges are Camberwell College of Arts, Central Saint Martins, Chelsea College of Arts, London College of Communication, London College of Fashion and Wimbledon College of Arts.

The university has a vibrant research culture across its six colleges, with eight University Research Centres and the University Innovation Insights Hub, which lead on innovative research and disseminate this through exhibitions, publications, conferences, festivals and workshops. The student body includes more than 2,500 students on postgraduate taught programmes, and 240 who are conducting postgraduate research. We have over 800 staff in our academic community of researchers and practitioners.

The recent Research Excellence Framework (REF 2014) placed the university in the overall top 30 UK research institutions for the quality of research submitted. It was placed in the top five research universities in its broader peer group and first in the Power ranking in the Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory category. The university's research can be described as being both practice and theory-based. Practice-based research is by its nature complex and varied, and this is reflected in the range of formats of the outputs submitted to our institutional repository, UAL Research Online.¹

Repository development: UAL Research Online

UAL Research Online was launched in 2010, and was developed as an outcome of the JISC-funded Kultur project,² which ran from 2007 to 2009.

At the time of the project, existing repository software, with its origins in the science, technology and medicine (STM) scholarly communications model, was not appropriate for the archiving and promotion of research in arts and design. The Kultur project was the first attempt to address these needs, with the aim of creating a transferable and sustainable institutional repository model for research outputs in these disciplines. The Kultur project partners were the University of Southampton (lead), University of the Arts London, Visual Arts Data Service and University for the Creative Arts.

This approach therefore included consultation and interviews with researchers at the project partner institutions, the better to understand practices and seek engagement with repository requirements (Shepherd 2008).

A major outcome of the project was the launch of EPrints software repositories for the project partners; this is adapted to managing and displaying the outputs produced in arts-based research practice.

This initiative proved to be the first of a series of JISC-funded projects in the area of repository development in which institutions collaborated within the discipline to develop services.³



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UAL Research Online today

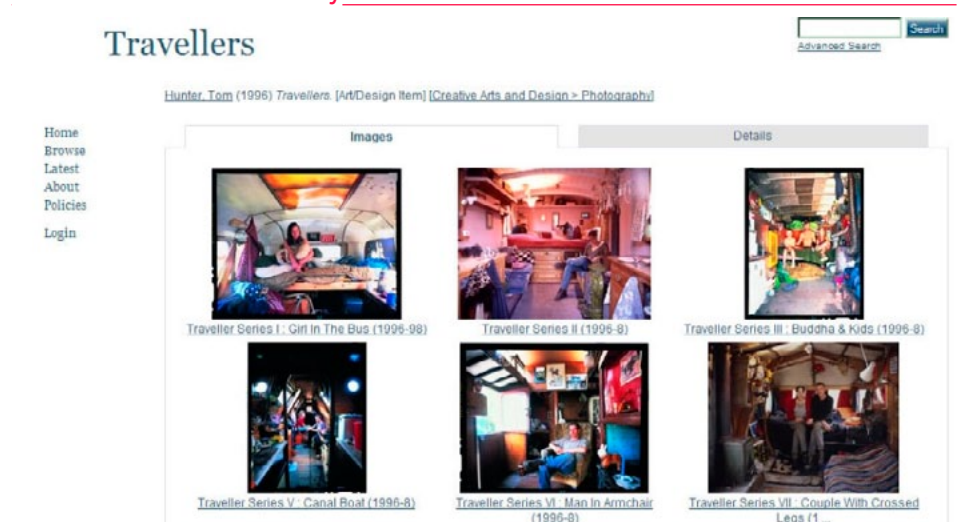


Fig. 1 Detail of an output on UAL Research Online (Travellers by Tom Hunter)

Since its launch in 2010, UAL Research Online and has grown steadily, establishing a position as an international exemplar of an online repository for research outputs in the arts and design disciplines. The repository now holds around 4,800 items, of which 47% have downloadable content: over 35,000 files. The collection reflects the diverse types of research outputs we produce, including:

- art/design Item (924)
- article (728)
- book (381)
- book section (655)
- conference, symposium or workshop Item (827)
- patent (7)
- performance (90)
- report (45)
- show/exhibition (1009)
- thesis (131)

Just under half of the items in the repository are text-based research outputs, with the remainder being practice-based work or a mixture of the two. There has been much discussion of the relative benefits and challenges of managing Green or Gold open access policies: for text publications, the university maintains a Green only open access policy, as this is the most appropriate for our subject area: we do not pay article processing charges as a matter of policy.

Managing practice-based research outputs

The management of non-text outputs presents particularly interesting challenges: non-text research outputs have been described as defiant objects (Nadim and Randall, 2013): they can be more slippery, and harder to define and control.

For non-text-based research, the research output with which the repository is concerned ideally consists of the artifact (an object, performance, or event, etc.), documentation of the process by which that artifact was created, and any relevant contextualisation. It can include images, movies, sound files, and any combination of these. For a performance, for example, there may be a film, still photos and sound recordings of interviews. Links can be provided

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to the gallery web page and the artist's web page. Related images are also relevant: scans of flyers and publicity materials, which reiterate and reinforce the artworks and the event.

Thus, one output is likely to be represented by a diverse collection of files. The aim is to curate the best collection of digital materials to provide the fullest representation of that research output.

A metadata schema for non-text outputs must be flexible enough to describe physical items, to describe multiple items within a single record, to include collaborators' contributions, and to record both objects and events in the same record. The prestige of the gallery in which an exhibition is held, for example, is analogous to the ranking of a journal in which an article is published, and therefore must be prominent.

Supporting research information management

UAL Research Online is not only an outward-facing disseminator of research, however; it also has an important role in research information management. In common with many arts-based institutions, the university has not found a satisfactory Current Research Information System (CRIS); the institutional repository has thus taken on some of the functionality of a CRIS.

Academic staff are required to report their research outputs via UAL Research Online as part of the annual performance review process each year, further embedding the repository in the university's workflows. UAL Research Online also provides content for the staff profiles hosted in the research web pages (see Fig. 2).

Both of these partnerships reinforce UAL Research Online's role as the single, authoritative location for details of the institution's research outputs. Our aim is that researchers should have to update details about research outputs in only one location – UAL Research Online – rather than repeatedly reporting to various university departments throughout the year.

Open access to theses

UAL Research Online makes available all the university's newly submitted PhD theses, by agreement with students, and plans to increase access to older theses through a digitisation project. Theses are one of our most important and highly viewed collections, as these unique, original research outputs are not available in print form without visiting the college library in which they are held. UAL Research Online thus opens them to a global audience. The planned retrospective digitisation, which will involve personal communication to every pre-2012 PhD graduate, renews the university's connections with its alumni, strengthening our community, and resurfaces research for a new audience.

Research data management developments: UAL Data Repository

The university's Research Management and Administration department (RMA) has developed policies and tools for research data management to support principal investigators with the application process and in meeting funder requirements.

A policy for research data management⁴ was approved by our Research Standards and Development Committee in 2012, and a University of the Arts London Data Repository is now in place, again an EPrints repository.⁵

These developments were given momentum by Library Services participation in the JISC-funded Kaptur project.⁶ The other project partners were The Glasgow School of Art, Goldsmiths, University of London and University for the Creative Arts, led by the Visual Arts Data Service (see Garrett *et al.*, 2013).



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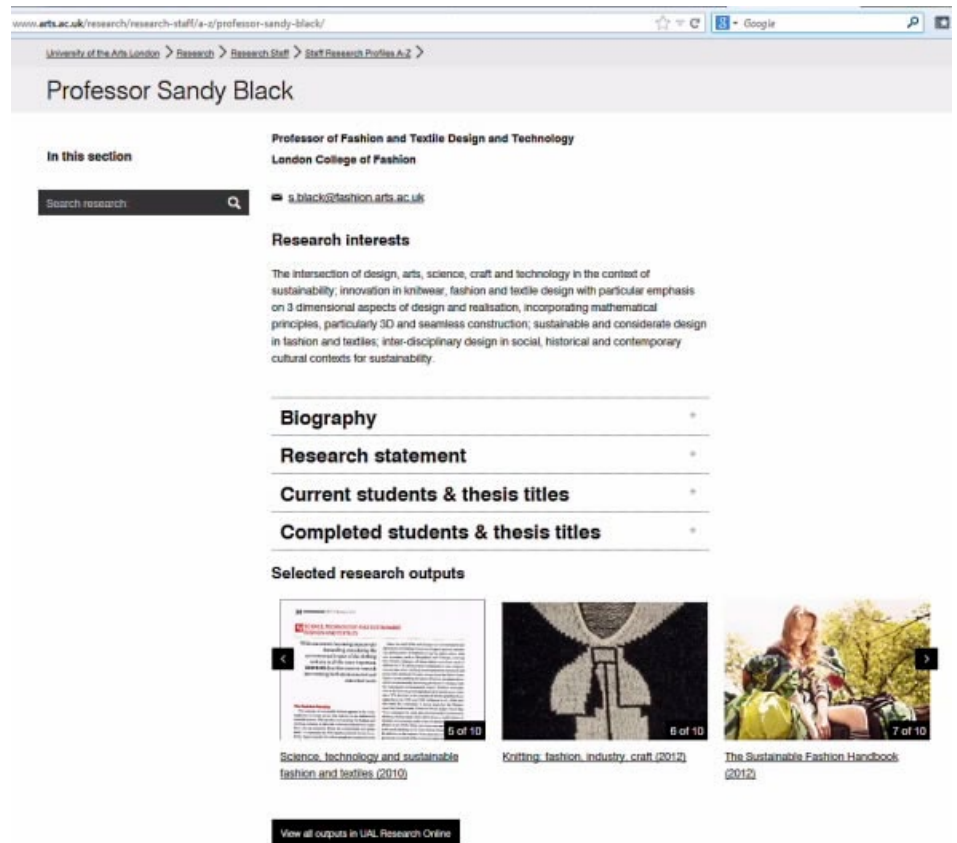


Fig. 2. Screenshot of a staff research profile page on the university website. The three images at the bottom of the screenshot are dynamically pulled from UAL Research Online, and are links to the repository where full details and more content can be accessed. The black button at the very bottom is a link to the full list of the researcher's work in the repository.

The Kaptur project objectives were:

- to investigate the nature of visual arts research data and make recommendations for its effective management
- to develop a model of best practice applicable to both specialist arts institutions and art departments within multidisciplinary institutions
- to apply, test and refine the model of best practice across the four partner institutions.

The university also benefited significantly in this area by working with the Digital Curation Centre through their institutional engagement programme.⁷

The research data repository is managed by RMA, in collaboration with the Library Services scholarly communications team. This is new territory, and the work is supported by a very active Community of Practice,⁸ which brings together researchers, RMA staff, librarians and other staff within the university, other higher education institutions and related organisations. The community is currently exploring multiple technical and theoretical issues around research data in the arts, thoroughly grounded in the use of practical case studies (Meece, 2014).

A collaborative approach

In summary, the initial development of these repositories, particularly UAL Research Online, was given stimulus through collaborative development in the higher education arts community.

However, a collaborative approach to the development of resources and services within the university is essential, notably between Library Services and

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RMA, to ensure a shared understanding of priorities, a joined-up approach to developments and co-ordinated communication with the research community. Similarly, continued close working and real empathy with the research community is required to understand practices and approaches.

This institutional collaboration was naturally intensified during the run-up to the REF 2014, with scholarly communications staff providing support to ensure the accurate description of research outputs for submission, and making sure that all the outputs were well represented on UAL Research Online. The institutional repository also informed and was cited in the Environment and Impact segments of the REF (REF 3a/b and 5). Work is now under way to plan processes around the next REF.

Changing roles: from institutional repository to scholarly communications managers

There has been much discussion within the profession of the role of librarians in supporting developments in repositories, open access and more recently research data management, and our plans and challenges here are in many ways typical of the sector (Cox and Verbaan 2014).

However, in developing and supporting services in the university there is an additional, discipline-specific context to be considered, and this context has been explored through collaborative projects in the sector, and continues to be explored in the university. One aspect of this is the heightened significance of the design of UAL Research Online: all repositories need to be as attractive and intuitive to use as possible, but in the case of the visual arts this is particularly important, as the repository becomes quite literally the online exhibition space for the researcher's work.

The period following the launch of UAL Research Online in 2010 has been one of rapid change in the scholarly communications environment, and the changing role of staff has been reflected here by a change of job title from Institutional Repository Manager to Scholarly Communications Manager. In addition to the work of managing the repository and ongoing advocacy can be added the interpretation and explanation of funder and HEFCE requirements, participation in institutional debates on open access, and ongoing investigation into the impact of these in our subject disciplines.

These activities are all indicative of the increasing role for libraries in the conservation, management and promotion of institutional intellectual assets, in addition to the more traditional activities of acquiring or arranging access to resources.

References

Cox, A. and Verbaan, E. 2014. Rising to the research data management challenge. *SCONUL Focus*, 60, pp. 42–4 http://www.sconul.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/13_13.pdf

Garrett, L., Gramstadt, M-T, Silva C., and Spalding A. 2013. KAPTUR the highlights: exploring research data management in the visual arts. *Ariadne*, 71 <http://www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue71/garrett-et-al>

Meece, S. 2014. Data Management [in EPrints] for arts research: the experience at University of the Arts London. Paper presented at Open Repositories 2014, Helsinki

Nadim, T. and Randall, R. 2013. Defiant Objects: non-standard research outputs in Institutional Repositories. See <http://eprints.gold.ac.uk/8015/>

Sheppard, V. 2008. Kultur Project User Survey Report. See <http://kultur.eprints.org/docs/Survey%20report%20final%20Aug%2008.pdf>



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UAL Library Services. Scholarly Communications Guide.
<http://arts.ac.libguides.com/scholcomm>

Notes

- 1 UAL Research Online <http://ualresearchonline.arts.ac.uk/>
- 2 he Kultur project (2007-2009) <http://kultur.eprints.org/index.htm>
- 3 Kultur 2 Group <http://www.vads.ac.uk/kultur2group/downloads/index.html>
- 4 UAL Research Data Management Policy <http://www.arts.ac.uk/research/research-environment/researcher-support/data-management/>
- 5 UAL Data Repository <http://www.researchdata.arts.ac.uk>
- 6 The Kaptur project (2011-13) <http://www.vads.ac.uk/kaptur/index.html>
- 7 Digital Curation Centre <http://www.dcc.ac.uk/tailored-support/institutional-engagements>
- 8 UAL Research data management community of practice blog <http://ualresearchdata.myblog.arts.ac.uk/>

All web sites accessed 26 January 2015

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