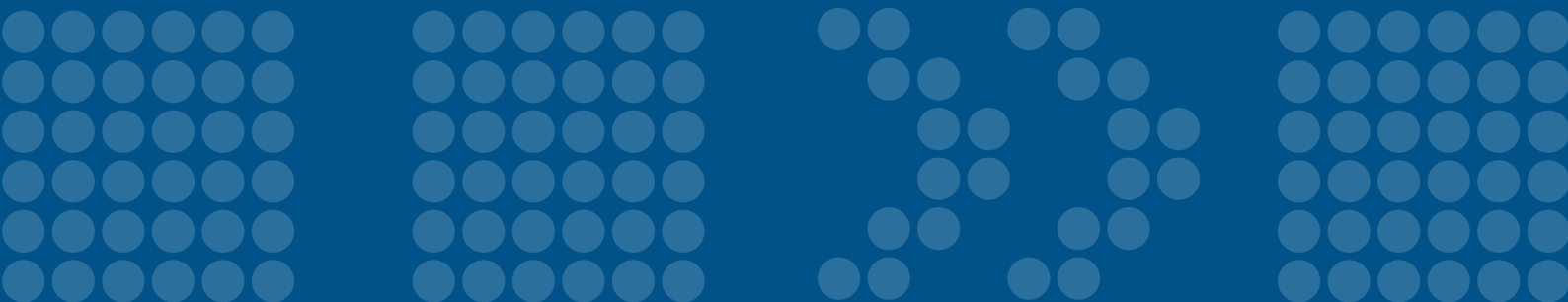
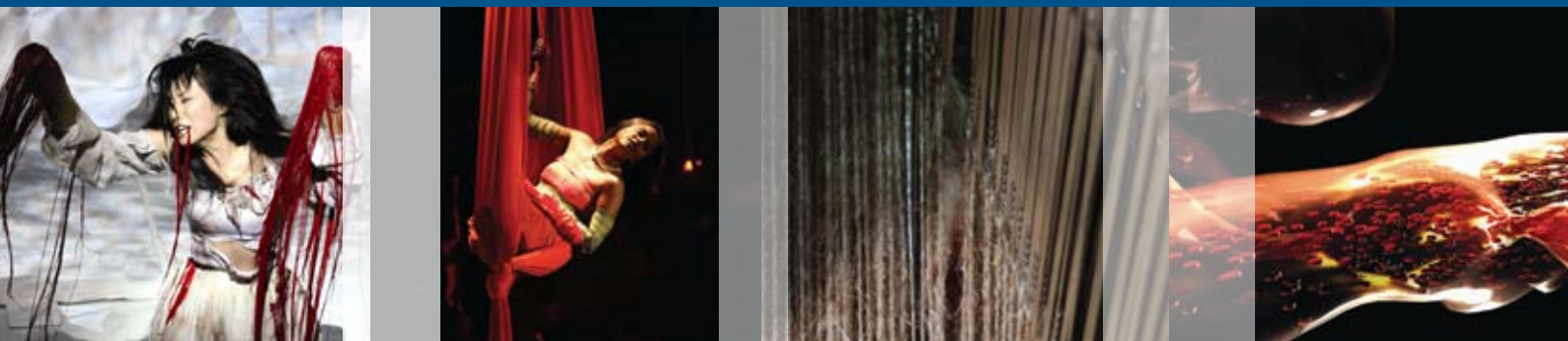

Creative innovation in the arts and humanities



Arts & Humanities
Research Council

“Arts and humanities research offers new approaches to issues that can have a profound impact on society”

Where we are, where we're going

If we think of innovation, we tend to think only of science and technology. But doing so ignores the vital contribution that arts and humanities research makes to the UK's prosperity and quality of life:

- Producing innovative goods and services
- Providing jobs and exports for the UK economy
- Generating new policy ideas
- Nourishing the UK's cultural existence and creative behaviour

We know that innovation is essential if the UK is to address urgent social issues and remain competitive in global markets. This is crucial in the current economic downturn. The arts and humanities can help by stimulating innovation in sectors with high potential growth, such as the digital industries.

Policy increasingly recognises the importance of arts and humanities research to creating an 'Innovation Nation'.¹ The AHRC is already a key supporter of innovation in the arts and humanities: we fund collaborative research, create a highly-skilled creative workforce, and encourage knowledge transfer.

But more can be done. We have an exciting role to play as innovation brokers: bringing policymakers in need of answers together with creative, innovative researchers to improve the wealth, health and quality of life of the nation. This is our challenge for the future.

Creative innovation helps solve social problems

Arts and humanities research offers new approaches to issues that can have a profound impact on society. Doctoral research by John McGhee brought his skills as a graphic artist to medical consultations to help communicate the processes of disease to patients. 3-D computer imagery combines with medical scans to provide a creative image, making the dialogue between doctor and patient less formal and more accessible.

Arts and humanities research can challenge conventional thinking. It can also provide an understanding of the historical context, traditions and cultural setting in which society and the economy function. For example, Dr Andrew Roach has used his expertise in medieval history to work with Volterra Consulting in drawing lessons about dealing with terrorists today from approaches taken during the Medieval Inquisition.

Hitomi Manaka as Lavinia in Ninagawa's Japanese Titus Andronicus, part of the RSC Complete Works Festival. Copyright RSC/Ellie Kurtz



¹ The Government's White Paper, *Innovation Nation* made clear that policy needs to recognise new sources of innovation. DIUS, 2008.

“We see a future where, if we think of innovation, we think of the arts and humanities”

Collaboration with the creative industries supports the UK economy

The UK has the largest creative sector in the European Union – and possibly the largest in the world, relative to GDP. Contributing over 7% of UK economic value, and directly employing over one million people, it rivalled the UK’s financial services industry even before the recent downturn.²

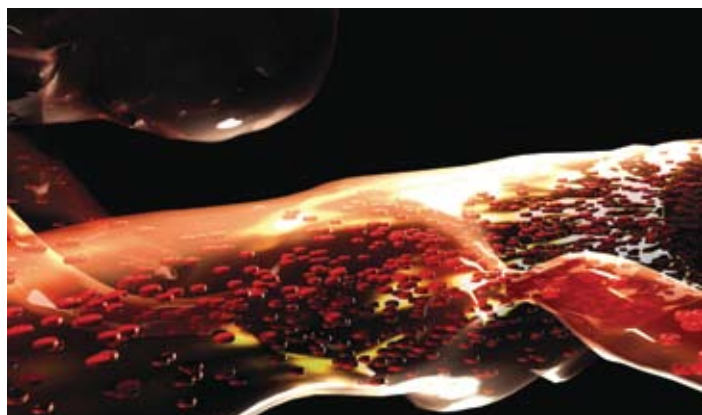
Arts and humanities research and graduates help fuel these industries. Collaborations between researchers and creative businesses can lead to exciting new developments that push the boundaries of existing technologies; for example, innovative video games often use art, drama, non-linear narratives and music to challenge existing formats.

A new experimental form of Alternative Reality Games, using multi-platform media, was created through a partnership between Dr Tom Abba and Licorice Films. The collaboration encouraged the growth of digital communities through virtual networking and ‘real world’ participation, leading to a high quality independent game that had over 30,000 participants world-wide.

Archana Ramaswamy as Titania in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, directed by Tim Supple, and part of the RSC Complete Works Festival. Copyright C P Satyajit

² Andari, R., Bakhsji, H., Hutton, W., O’Keefe, A. and Schneider, P. (2007) *Staying Ahead: The economic performance of the UK’s Creative Industries*. London: The Work Foundation.





A 3-D visualisation of a medical condition known as renal artery stenosis. Copyright John McGhee

Innovation improves our quality of life

Arts and humanities research can provide new perspectives on our cultural heritage. New digital archives, exciting new productions of Shakespeare plays, or exhibitions exploring the influence of the past on current events enrich our lives and encourage reflection. For example, Professor Kathleen McLuskie is leading a team in exploring the potential of English literary heritage to meet the diverse social, commercial and educational demands made of it in the twenty-first century. Using the Royal Shakespeare Company's Complete Works Festival as a test case, their work will inform future cultural and educational policy for the arts.

Arts and humanities innovation influences industry

Knowledge transfer is crucial to innovation. Creative, innovative researchers across the art and humanities subject domain are collaborating with a wide range of sectors on innovative projects, supported by AHRC funding. We are increasing our support of knowledge transfer across all schemes, and developing our brokerage role in bringing researchers and businesses together.

For example, Dr Julie Soden is using an AHRC Research Grant to create textile reinforcement materials that could help to revolutionise the construction and infrastructure industries. The aim is to combine technical expertise gained in aerospace engineering research with creative design expertise to produce radical, high-quality technical products using sustainable materials.

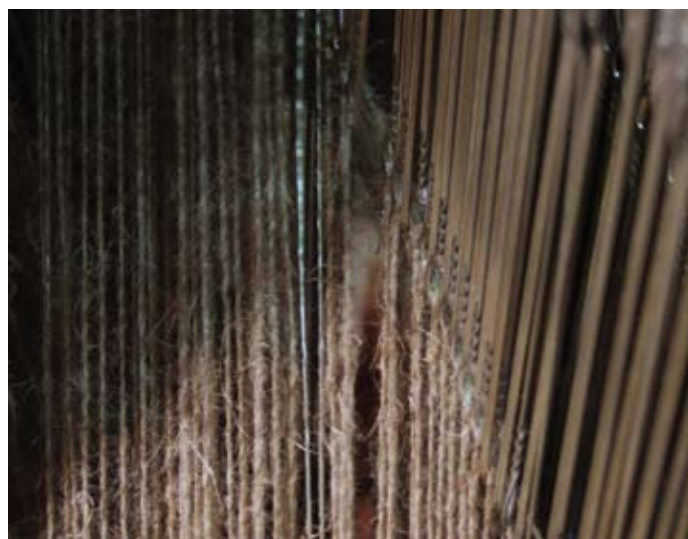
AHRC funding encourages innovation

We support innovation by funding research projects, often involving large collaborative teams investigating complex problems. Our support for knowledge transfer across all schemes inspires a culture where researchers work with other sectors for their mutual benefit – and society's gain.

We also help to develop the highly-skilled people who are vital if innovation is to thrive. We made over 1,600 new postgraduate awards in the last academic year, helping students gain transferable skills - such as project management, communication and team-working – as well as high-level research skills. And Collaborative Doctoral Awards are there to allow doctoral students to gain first-hand experience of work in other sectors.

And the AHRC is here to help policymakers

We believe there is an exciting role for us to play in acting as a broker between policymakers and researchers. We are already developing our work in this area: hosting policy seminars, supporting policy fellowships and developing our connections with key policymakers. But there is more to be done. Our challenge is to make our researchers the logical partners for policymakers. We see a future where, if we think of innovation, we think of the arts and humanities.



Combining Engineering and Design Aesthetics: Surface Relief Pattern on 3D Woven Preforms. Copyright Julie Soden



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