

<b>Institution:</b> University of Oxford
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 29
<b>Title of case study:</b> Open Educational Resources (OERs) in English: Enriching the School Curriculum and Supporting Transition from School to University
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Great Writers Inspire (<a href="http://www.writersinspire.org">www.writersinspire.org</a>) is a JISC funded project designed by Smith, Williams and Beasley in collaboration with IT services to expand the Oxford English Faculty's open educational resources on the web. Prompted by the success of Smith's Approaching Shakespeare podcast lectures (2010), GWI represents a systematic approach to creating, gathering and curating online research content targeted directly at students and teachers in secondary schools, further education, lifelong learning, and universities. Combining tailor-made podcasts, curated eBooks, audio talks, video files, and scholarly essays, GWI and AS have brought the Faculty's research to a global audience of over 740,000.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Great Writers Inspire (GWI) draws on the research expertise of 37 Faculty members, as well as a number of post-graduate researchers based within the Faculty who have acted as Student Ambassadors, making their own contributions and supporting project activities. The underpinning research is highly various, but the contributors have in common a concern to mediate current ideas and questions galvanising university-level research for students at an earlier stage in their literature and language education. Horobin, for example, draws upon his publications in the field of historical sociolinguistics and analysis of processes of linguistic standardisation, for an accessible critical appraisal of historical and modern attitudes to linguistic variation and normativity. His early period expertise is complemented by Wakelin's (2011-) work on textuality and editorial issues in late medieval literature. Stern (2008-) specializes in Renaissance Theatre, Smith (1999-) in Shakespeare's Contemporary Dramatists; both have a strong focus on performance. 18C literature is studied by Ballaster (1994-), who has a long-standing interest in oriental fictions, Williams (2001-), who has produced a critical edition of Jonathan Swift's <i>Journal to Stella</i> and completed a major digital project on poetic miscellanies, and Sutherland (1996-) who evaluates manuscript sources of 18th and early 19th century fiction, with special attention to Austen. The Victorian period is an area of interest for Douglas-Fairhurst (2002-), working on Tennyson and Dickens, and Brown (2007-2013), focusing on George Eliot. Two contributing scholars are experts in modernism: Beasley (2009-) studies Ezra Pound, with a focus on the visual arts; Binckes (2002-2013) examines the writing of Katherine Mansfield and modernist magazines. Boehmer (2007-), Peter D. McDonald (1995-), and Mukherjee (2003-) work on postcolonial, anticolonial and transnational writers and themes from 1870 to the present, including Olive Schreiner and J.M. Coetzee.</p> <p>The initial development of GWI rested especially on Smith's research into Shakespeare. Her 'Approaching Shakespeare' podcasts draw together a range of methodologies to focus on specific plays and the questions they generate. Asking why Hamlet is called Hamlet, for instance, enables her to develop the history of character and psychological criticism; investigating where the political sympathies of Richard II might lie draws on new bibliographical work and on the history of performance; working with the unnecessary character of Antonio in <i>Twelfth Night</i> is a way to engage in a nexus of queer criticism, historicism, and theatre. Throughout the lecture series she builds on the interdisciplinary approaches of her published research.</p>
<p><b>3. References to the research</b> (selected examples, with evidence of quality)</p> <p>Simon Horobin, <i>Studying the History of Early English</i>. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010; Chaucer's Language. Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Available on request.</p> <p>Peter McDonald, <i>The Literature Police: Apartheid Censorship and its Cultural Consequences</i>,</p>

## Impact case study (REF3b)

O.U.P, 2009, pbk and etext 2010; REF2: McDonald – N01; website [www.theliteraturepolice.com](http://www.theliteraturepolice.com). TLS book of the year, *Guardian* Christmas book, 2009; shortlisted for the Warwick Prize for Writing, 2011.

Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, *Becoming Dickens* (Harvard UP, 2011), REF2: Douglas-Fairhurst – N01; 2011 Duff Cooper Prize

Tiffany Stern: *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), REF2: Stern – N01; TLS book of the year, 2010; Winner of The David Bevington Award for Best New Book in Early Drama Studies, 2010; George Freedley Award Finalist, 2010.

Emma Smith, *Five History Plays* (Continuum, 2000). Available on request; edited, with Garrett Sullivan, *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Tragedy* (CUP 2010). DOI: 10.1017/CCOL9780521519373; *The Cambridge Shakespeare Guide* (CUP, 2012). Available on request; *Macbeth: Language and Writing* (Bloomsbury, 2013). Available on request.

Ros Ballaster, *Fabulous Orientals: Fictions of the East in England 1662-1785* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199234295.001.0001. Winner of the Rose Mary Crawshay Prize 2006.

Ankhi Mukherjee, 'What is a Classic?': International Literary Criticism and the Classic Question', *PMLA* 125 (2010). REF2: Mukherjee – N01

Rebecca Beasley, *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Available on request.

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#### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

'Approaching Shakespeare' and 'Great Writers Inspire' have had significant impact on a range of beneficiaries outside Higher Education, including **school students and their teachers and life-long learners**. AS was and is the most successful of the Faculty's early experiments with the podcast lecture format. **Downloaded 407,319 times** by the end of the audit period, it is a recommended resource in schools across the UK. The series was trialled by Smith in October 2010 with technical assistance from IT Services, and quickly taken up by the school and university sectors, becoming a staple resource for teaching and learning about Shakespeare. Email feedback includes: 'I came across [AS] last year on iTunes when writing on Othello, and found your lecture a fantastic help... as an introduction to ways of thinking about the play, and to how I might try to put together an argument about it' (Ref. 1) from a 6<sup>th</sup> form student; and 'As head of More Able and Talented at a large state school, I am constantly looking for resources to improve our teaching and your podcasts are giving us just that opportunity. Members of the English department are now using Wittgenstein's Dabbit illustration in the way you did and finding it to be a very effective approach and our more able students are being encouraged to listen to the podcasts both to improve their understanding of the plays and to encourage them to believe that Oxford ... operates at A-level they will find accessible' (Ref. 2) from a teacher.

Experiencing this success, and recognising a need for further resources to bridge the divide between the research university and other learning environments, Smith worked with Beasley and Williams on a JISC grant proposal for funding to support more ambitious efforts at making Faculty research freely available on-line. Launched 18 April 2012, [www.writersinspire.org](http://www.writersinspire.org) now makes **3,598 open resource content items** available to the public. All are licensed for educational reuse worldwide, the majority labelled with a Creative Commons licence. The figure includes **3,021 eBooks** (the majority, c. 3,000, from the Oxford Text Archive of scholarly texts deposited with IT services in pre-1990s electronic versions), **195 audio talks**, including **119 video files**, **89 short**

**scholarly contextual essays** written by academic researchers or graduate students, plus **96 images**. **37 academics** from the UOA have contributed content in the form of lectures and/or scholarly essays. Curated by subject specialists from within the Faculty, steered and evaluated by the demands of the subject community with the help of school partners, GWI was designed to combat the data deluge facing potential users of online digital materials related to English literature. eBooks and videos are framed and introduced with essays and contextual material. A number of resources have been adapted for presentation on portable devices such as tablets and smartphones. Collecting existing materials together and enriching them with new resources has gained an audience for materials unlikely otherwise to attract notice at secondary school level. This process has taken place in part through a WordPress blog (<http://writersinspire.wordpress.com/>), launched June 2009, which captures new resources and academics' scholarly posts. Paid graduate student ambassadors contributed content, including blog entries and short essays (e.g. explanatory context for items in the Oxford Text Archive). All material goes into Apple's global publishing platform Apple iTunes U, and (in parallel) into the main university media website [www.podcast.ox.ac.uk](http://www.podcast.ox.ac.uk) to enable more direct retrieval through Google. IT-Support have worked closely with Google, who already ranked the University of Oxford highly, using titles, keywords, and sheer volume of content to maximize GWI's ranking in their search engine. Type the word 'lectures' and the name of a major British author or text into Google (e.g. 'Shakespeare', 'Dickens', 'Beowulf'), and Oxford English Faculty material will generally be the first search finding. (Ref. i).

The popularity of GWI encouraged the Faculty to invest further resources of time and money in the project. GWI was given a design update in summer 2013, with the aid of £5000 of Faculty funding. Two interns worked under the direction of IT to redesign the site and engage in promotional social networking. New content was added, in particular a new series entitled 'Challenging the Canon', launched 25 July. As described on the site (<http://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/series/challenging-canon>), 'This unique mini-series aims to challenge the literary canon by posing the thorny question "why should we study...?" to experts at the University of Oxford. Beginning with the overarching question "why should we study the humanities?" and moving on to illuminating discussions about key writers ... these podcasts will introduce you to new perspectives ... A perfect study companion for prospective undergraduates, lifelong learners and literary enthusiasts.' The redesign was recommended to Apple by Peter Robinson (IT Services), on the basis that the series 'would suit a broad audience ... would have a lot of varied expert content on 'The Canon' and would be worth promoting IMHO.' Apple responded enthusiastically, promoting the series prominently with the advertising hook 'Challenging the Canon' (Ref. ii). Activity on Twitter and Facebook led popular blogger Oliver Tearle to volunteer a wordpress guest blog, boosting the site's following (Ref. iii). At the close of the audited period GWI had attracted **292,110 video downloads and 42,252 audio downloads**. 'Challenging the Canon' has already reached **31,000+ views, 6000+ downloads and is averaging 1177 downloads weekly (168 daily)**. The recent presence of GWI and CC on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/greatwritersinspire>) and Twitter has to date produced 267 likes and over 400 followers. The global relevance and usefulness of the project and its constituent materials are indicated by the range of countries in which the project blog has been accessed, including the USA, India, Canada, Japan, as well as the UK.

GWI's **impact in schools** has been enhanced by active engagement of the researchers with teachers through conference participation. Smith was invited (in 2012 and 13) to address the eMagazine 6th Form Conference, the London Association for Teachers of English, and a number of schools including Queen's Park Community College and Harris Academy Dulwich. She used the occasions to introduce teachers and students to the resources. School English teachers have also benefited from workshops organised by members of the Faculty with GWI, such as the 'Engage' workshop (April 2012), and the 'Teaching with Shakespeare's First Folio' workshop (June 2013). These events (total attendance 52) offered participants opportunities to engage in resource creation and distribution, demonstrating a real exchange of ideas and expertise with scholars working on specific literary themes and topics. All those who completed feedback forms thought the workshop 'extremely useful'; all but one were planning to use the First Folio resource in their teaching – e.g. by adopting the workshop 'focus on language change and aspects of graphology' and 'using it for Language Change as part of the English Language A-level'.

Many **secondary school teachers** have testified to how GWI is enriching their teaching materials. ‘Some of the students have definitely got into considering writers that they wouldn’t have considered before. For example two girls were interested in Aphra Behn and they’d never heard of her before ... [T]he website prompts that sort of thing; students can investigate aspects of literature that they wouldn’t have thought of before’ (A-level teacher, Oxford, July 2012); ‘from my point of view as a Head of English it’s already fantastically useful. It contains very accessible, critical material, contextual material, background material’ (A-level teacher, Derbyshire, June 2012). ‘Some students feel that they do not belong in this literary world – they ask how does this fit in with all this literature? Access to [GWI] helps us address this question’ (A-level teacher, Somerset, June 2012). **School students** too have benefited from GWI’s encouragement of a wide range of learning styles. The resources include items complementary to GCSE and A-level syllabi, as well as undergraduate level materials suitable for students who can handle more challenging texts and ideas. 6th form student feedback on a workshop undertaken by members of Faculty with a local school in June 2012 includes: ‘It was great learning about Aphra Behn – we’d never heard of her before and she’s really interesting’ (Ref. iv). GWI also offers **life-long learners** with an interest in classic texts a wealth of material. In particular the categorisation of resources into themed collections such as ‘Feminist Readings of Literature’ and ‘Questioning Genre’ has allowed self-educators to develop their understanding of familiar literary works, and engage with previously unknown ones. A beneficiary responds: ‘For retired people like me podcasts of lectures (recorded raw, not dressed up as some have them, complete with distracting background music) are a boon. Lifelong learning! Saves us from having to watch “countdown”’ (Ref. v).

Within the HEI, GWI has greatly assisted institutional policy and practice with regard to creative commons licenses. The designers and curators of the project have worked closely with other institutions possessing experience in provision of free online resources (notably Adelaide University, which has long been providing free literary etexts under CC licence; links to many of their texts are provided in supporting reading lists to GWI material). The project has raised academic awareness about open access to research, and encouraged proactive engagement with the political and legal debates (Ref. vi).

##### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

###### *Testimony*

- (1). Email from 6th form student, Birmingham, 16.10.11.
- (2). Email from teacher, London 4.11.10.

###### *Other evidence sources*

- (i). *The Great Writers OER Project Evaluation Report* (independently commissioned).
- (ii). Screen shot of Apple promotion of ‘Challenging the Canon’, 13 September 2013
- (iii). Oliver Tearle’s blog entry: <http://writersinspire.wordpress.com>
- (iv). GWI Schools Engagement: <http://writersinspire.wordpress.com/2012/07/17/schools-engagement-at-cheney-oxford/> <http://writersinspire.wordpress.com/2012/07/17/schools-engagement-at-cheney-teachers-comments/>
- (v). Anonymous respondent. Collated [www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com) feedback.
- (vi). OpenSpires discussion of Open Data and Policies on OA: <http://blogs.it.ox.ac.uk/openspires/>

All download figures courtesy of IT-Support, University of Oxford.