

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: Ulster University		
Unit of Assessment: English Language and Literature (27)		
Title of case study: Enriching the Experience of Ulster-Scots Literature through Public Outreach, Broadcasting and Digital Preservation.		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2005 - 2017		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Dr Frank Ferguson	Senior Lecturer in English	2005 - present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014 - 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Ferguson's wide-ranging research impact on Ulster-Scots literature involves using research findings to provide guidance to museums, broadcasters, local government and the schools system in Northern Ireland (NI). Impact is evident in:</p> <p>I1 Production of new cultural artefacts in Ulster-Scots literary history through partnership with museums.</p> <p>I2 Extensive partnership with broadcasters in co-production of a range of television and radio programmes.</p> <p>I3 Increasing participation in Ulster-Scots literature through working with NI's Ministerial Advisory Group for an Ulster-Scots Academy (MAGUS) to create a report on archives, preserve Ulster-Scots texts and engage with marginalised communities.</p> <p>I4 Collaboration with educators to generate and embed innovative learning materials for Ulster-Scots literature, history, language, heritage and culture.</p> <p>I5 Enhanced cultural understanding of issues and phenomena leading to academic success in schools.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning Research</p> <p>Dr Frank Ferguson's research at Ulster University represents the most sustained externally sponsored academic research on Ulster-Scots literature in the world in the last 15 years. Ferguson's <i>Ulster-Scots Writing: An Anthology</i> (2008) (R1) was part of a new wave of revisionist thinking that challenged ill-informed and sectarian stereotypes of the literary tradition. This work alongside <i>Revising Robert Burns and Ulster: Literature, Religion and Politics, c.1770-1920</i>, 'Ulster-Scots Literature' and 'The Industrialisation of the Irish Book' (R2 - R4, 2009 – 2011), created a bedrock that showed Ulster-Scots literature to be a broad, creative, and lively strand of the cultural fabric of the province of Ulster, and of profound significance to the province's wider culture and best-known writers. This investigation was carried out amid the backdrop of conflict resolution measures brought into NI in the wake of the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement in which major steps were taken to reassess the cultural history of all traditions within NI. Ferguson's research helped inform this process and provided significant insights into writers' use of and influence by Ulster-Scots language and literature.</p> <p>R1 found that the Ulster-Scots tradition in Ireland was much more extensive than originally thought. It argued that, rather than being restricted to one group of writers, Ulster-Scots linguistic and cultural features could be mapped and understood to have involved diverse waves of networks of writers and individuals, from the 16th century to the present day. The research has generated a living database of writers which continues to grow with Ferguson's ongoing work on government projects and broadcast initiatives. This database expands our understanding of</p>		

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Ulster-Scots literature and culture by identifying Ulster writers who prior to this research were either not included in the literary canon or were not recognised as Ulster-Scots writers.

R2 extended further the list of known writers by challenging the myth of the traditional school of Ulster-Scots poets as being mere imitators of the Scottish poet Robert Burns. Ferguson, along with Andrew Holmes (QUB), brought together a panel of expert critics who demonstrated the invalidity of this belief and expanded knowledge on the interplay between Scottish and Ulster-Scots writing from the late 18th to the early 20th century.

R3 - R5 (G1 - G3), 2011- 2017, underpinned subsequent research on the writing community and provided the means to extend understanding of what was meant by Ulster-Scots literature, language and culture. Often research on Ulster-Scots writing was placed within non-peer reviewed, self-published texts with a small readership. Ferguson's work moved beyond these limits by situating the research in significant presses with thorough peer-review systems and within collections that placed the research in important contextual and theoretical frameworks for a variety of academic and non-scholarly audiences.

3. References to the research Outputs can be provided by Ulster University on request.

The following outputs have been subject to blind peer review practice by internationally-based editorial boards for publication in internationally accredited academic presses.

R1. Frank Ferguson, ed. *Ulster-Scots Writing: An Anthology*. Dublin. 527pp. (Four Courts, Dublin 2008). ISBN-13: 978-1846820748

R2. Frank Ferguson and Andrew Holmes, eds. *Revising Robert Burns and Ulster: Literature, Religion and Politics, c.1770-1920*. (Four Courts, Dublin, 2009). ISBN-13: 978-1846821974

R3. Frank Ferguson, 'Ulster-Scots Literature' in *Oxford History of the Irish Book*, vol. IV, ed. James H. Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp420-431. ISBN-13: 978-0198187318

R4. Frank Ferguson, 'The Industrialisation of the Irish Book' in *Oxford History of the Irish Book*, vol. IV, ed. James H. Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp9-26. ISBN-13: 978-0198187318

R5. Ferguson, F. (2017). 'We wove our ain wab'. In *A History of Irish Working-Class Writing* (pp. 89-101). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316570425.006>

Grants obtained:

G1: Jedrzejewski, J., Ferguson, F. & White, K. '*Ulster-Scots Collectors Project*', Ulster Scots Academy (December 2013 - May 2014), GBP13,000

G2: Ferguson, F., Clarke, L. & White, K., '*Ulster Scots Educational Materials and Outreach Activities*', DCAL - Dept of Culture, Arts & Leisure (September 2013 –April 2015), GBP370,603

G3: Ferguson, F., '*Ulster-Scots Literary Encyclopaedia Project*', Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (November 2012 - March 2013), GBP35,000

4. Details of the impact

I1: Production of new cultural artefacts in partnership with museums on Ulster-Scots literary history

Ferguson's reputation as an expert on Ulster-Scots literature has led to his involvement in the development of archival resources, exhibitions and public engagement in Ulster-Scots initiatives by local councils and museums.

For the Causeway and Glens Museum Service (CGMS), he '**helped us secure grants from DCAL MAGUS initially and then GBP77,150 from the Esmee Fairbairn Collections Fund ...for the Sam Henry: Connecting with the Past, Collecting for the Future project**'. (C1) Approximately 1,700 people have engaged with, participated in or visited the outputs from the Sam Henry project to the end of 2019.

This success led to further collaborations, such as the 1718 Bann Valley Commemorations where Ferguson hosted a public conference at the Ulster University Coleraine campus. '**Frank played a key role in connecting stakeholders on both sides of the Atlantic that resulted in Council having a presence at the Maine Ulster Scots Group 1718 events programme in August 2018,**' thus generating connections between communities on both sides of the Atlantic

and creating opportunities for cultural exchange and tourism (C1). This association has culminated in Ulster University and the CGMS working together on supervising an AHRC Northern Bridge Collaborative PhD project on the Sam Henry Collection (GBP35,256). This also enabled the museum and the university to partner with the Ulster-Scots Agency and permitted ***'the Ulster-Scots Agency to make vital connections at home and in the US which have resulted in a variety of important projects including conferences and publications in Maine; celebration events in Maine and New Hampshire ...; an exhibition in New Orleans; and most recently jointly delivered distance learning opportunities for adults and children in Northern Ireland and Maine.... We are now in discussion with Causeway Coast and Glens Council about how this work can be taken forward in the context of building a broader relationship between the Council and the state of Maine.'*** (C2)

In 2018 Ferguson acted as consultant for the Mid and East Antrim Museum service's 'Hand to the Plough: Robert Burns Exhibition.' The Museum & Heritage Manager of Mid and East Antrim Council said that through Ferguson's ***'input into the exhibition script, an enhanced cultural understanding of Ulster Scots influence was realised by a range of stake holders'***. (C3) The exhibition was viewed by approximately 2,500 people in Mid-Antrim Museum, Ballymena; Carrickfergus Museum & Civic Centre; Larne Museum & Arts Centre; and Antrim Castle Gardens.

12. Extending partnership with several broadcasters in co-production of a range of television programmes

Ferguson's longstanding role in the creation of programming with television production companies has expanded in this cycle, his research (R1-R5) has informed the production of 7 TV programmes. His significance has been described by one television producer: ***'Frank's work and ongoing engagement with the unfolding cultural stories of Ulster-Scots means that he will continue to be a touchstone for me, and for other broadcasters with an interest in this important area'***. (C4)

Ferguson was the language and literature consultant and/or interviewee on the following documentaries: *In the Shadow of the Shipyards* (DoubleBand), *Burns and Mair* (Barking Dog), *Sam Henry* (Below the Radar/Sonas) *Imagining Ulster, A Carryin' Stream, Hame and Burns by the Lagan* (McGuire). His role in these productions was pivotal, as companies are required to have an acknowledged expert named on applications to the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund. One of the production companies reported: ***'Frank's input, based on his expertise and knowledge, greatly enhanced our understanding of the key themes and content relating to Ulster-Scots literature. This led to a richer and more valuable exploration of this content within the programmes'***. (C5)

A producer from DoubleBand suggested: ***'in offering his advice and guidance through the research, development, production and post-production of such programmes, Frank plays a key role in this process'***. (C5)

Sam Henry: Songs Of The People (Sonas / Below The Radar, 2018), a three-hour series including a concert in English and Irish, was one of the first productions to draw on funding from both the Ulster-Scots Language Fund and the Irish Broadcast Fund. One of the producers stated: ***'The appointment of Frank Ferguson... was of strategic importance to the funders and the broadcast channels. As a result of Frank Ferguson's input into the development of the series an enhanced cultural understanding of Sam Henry himself, and more widely Ulster-Scots literature, was realised. This was particularly important in the Republic of Ireland where Ulster-Scots funded output was rare until this series was made.'*** (C6)

Ferguson's most recent consultancy is in the *Lough Foyle* series (Westway Films, 2020), a 10-part series which regularly achieves the highest audience share at 8pm in NI. BBC NI producer stated ***'The Lough Foyle series attracted a live viewership of 1.4 million across NI over the course of its ten-week run, and I have no doubt that Frank Ferguson's overall input to the series, based on his own scholarship and research, was a major contribution to our success in promoting a greater understanding and appreciation of Ulster-Scots language, literature and culture'***. (C7) (R1, R2, R5) Ferguson's work has been instrumental in helping production companies work and develop within the sector and has helped them raise approximately GBP250,000 in the last 7 years with programmes such as *Burns and Mair* receiving approximately GBP70,000 in funding.

I3. Working with the NI Ministerial Advisory Group for an Ulster-Scots Academy to create report on archives, preserve Ulster-Scots texts and engage marginalised communities to increase participation in Ulster-Scots literature

Ferguson's research (R1- R5) was instrumental in gaining funding from local government, in this research cycle, in excess of GBP400,000. The Ulster-Scots Education Project, in association with the NI Ministerial Advisory Group for an Ulster-Scots Academy (MAGUS), commissioned Ferguson, Kathryn White and Linda Clarke (Ulster) to submit a report on Ulster-Scots Archival Holdings in Northern Ireland as part of its Ulster-Scots Education Project. This report published in 2018 assisted MAGUS's brief to build a broad understanding of the Ulster-Scots tradition in Ireland and further afield. The Chairperson for MAGUS reported: **'We asked him to do a lot in a short period. Frank and his team successfully delivered it all. Indeed, they exceeded our expectations on many fronts... Frank's leadership and influence undoubtedly stimulated public interest and engagement in this hitherto neglected field of research'** (C8) Alongside this the project preserved approximately 100 texts of historic and literary value and made them available to the public through Ulster University's website. Similarly, the Ulster Scots Collectors Project, funded by the Ulster-Scots Agency, allowed Ferguson, Jan Jedrzejewski and White to work with UU and Queen's University Belfast special collections to digitally preserve the work of Allan Ramsay, Thomas Percy, Samuel Ferguson, and John Hewitt. The CEO from the Ulster-Scots Agency commented: **'This work helped preserve a series of important local collections and provide access to public audiences. The project preserves hundreds of scans of significant Ulster writing and makes available highly important literary texts and manuscripts for our stakeholders and general public through a bespoke, free to access website. As part of the project Dr Ferguson took part in our inaugural Ulster-Scots Language Week, with a public talk on the project and his research that was delivered to members of the public and key policy-makers from NI's devolved administration.'** (C2) In recognition of Ferguson's reputation as an expert on Ulster-Scots literature, language and culture, he has been invited by the NI Government in 2020 to sit on an advisory panel for Ulster-Scots as part of the New Decade, New Approach strategy, and by Derry City and Strabane District Council (with Niall Comer (Ulster)) to contribute to the council's initiative on indigenous languages.

I4. Driving up standards with educators to generate and embed innovative learning materials for Ulster-Scots literature, history, language, heritage and culture

Ferguson, White and Clarke worked closely with NI's Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment to produce a suite of online teaching materials on Ulster-Scots literature and history. They ran an Ulster-Scots writing initiative for schools and the public over two years. A representative from Coleraine College commented: **'The opportunity to collaborate with UU and engage in such high-quality activities raised the department's profile positively and it made clear to colleagues in other subject areas that their expectations of students needed to be increased. Here was clear evidence that they were capable of much more in the right circumstances. The two year-groups which participated in this project formed part of the cohort which first broke through the 40% A*-C barrier and in the subsequent year the 50% A*-C one. I have no doubt that participation in this project changed how students thought about themselves, changed their perception of English for the better and that this translated very practically into improved GCSE outcomes.'** (C9)

I5. Enhanced cultural understanding of issues and phenomena leading to academic success in schools

Ferguson's research facilitated youth engagement with Ulster-Scots language and literature, and encouraged a new group of approximately 40 young people who previously had not engaged with Ulster-Scots or the creative arts to take up poetry, including displaying their work through an in-house publication. Furthermore, Ferguson provided lectures and workshops in the Seamus Heaney HomePlace, engaging with approximately 1,000 pupils in the past four years. These lectures have been described by one pupil from St Louis Grammar as follows: **'each of us got a taste of higher level education by being lucky enough to attend a lecture by University of**

***Ulster's Frank Ferguson. He introduced us to new and exciting ways to explore [Seamus Heaney] and his poetry and instilled us with added passion for our literary heritage.'* (C10)**

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

C1. Testimonial from Museum's Officer Causeway and Glens Museum Service.

C2. Testimonial from CEO, Ulster-Scots Agency.

C3. Testimonial from Museum & Heritage Manager, Mid and East Antrim Museum & Heritage Service.

C4. Testimonial from Television Producer.

C5. Testimonial from Director, DoubleBand Films.

C6. Testimonial from Series Producer, Below the Radar.

C7. Testimonial from Managing Director, Westway Films.

C8. Treasures of the Archives – Ulster-Scots Resources available in Northern Ireland: (MAGUS) 2018; Chair's Testimonial (MAGUS).

C9. Testimonial from Head of English, Coleraine College.

C10. Testimonial in St Louisa Grammar School Magazine.