



REF 2014

Our vision

Research centres

Impact

Our Impact

Business  
and  
Economy

# Writing and the small presses

Dr Scott Thurston of the School of Arts and Media has developed research which has supported the creation of new contexts and networks for the development and showcasing of innovative writing:

- Informing new approaches to publishing poetry and influencing new publishing ventures;
- Shaping new places and spaces for performance and inspired and supported new generations of poets in

## Research centres

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Building the picture of Salford Impact

Research Excellence Framework 2014

Impact in applications for funding

Researcher development

creating career paths in their field;

- **Diversifying audiences through the creation of a lively alternative literary scene committed to experimental methodologies and defined by inclusive communities of expression and original forms of participation; and**
- **Creating an archive of performances, a unique resource for the experimental writing scene.**

## Poetry, performance and publication

Scott's research as both critic and practitioner in the context of innovative poetry and the UK small press scene has developed a focus on the relationship between innovative form, publication, professionalisation, performance and audience engagement.

His research has informed a practice methodology which has influenced the creative choices of new professional writers, supporting them in placing their work in an alternative context and participating in a lively literary scene, publishing their work in magazines, chapbooks and anthologies; starting their own publishing initiatives and performing their work and setting up events. The success of a number of these ventures has developed the profile of alternative literary practice and brought it to wider national attention in the context of publishing and awards.

- Salford graduate Alec Newman set up his own small poetry press called **The Knives Forks and Spoons Press** (KFS), which over the last three years has blossomed into one of the most dynamic and exciting small press poetry publishers in the UK, with an expanding list of over 100

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authors. The press was shortlisted for two years running for the Michael Marks Award for Best Publisher of Poetry in Pamphlet Form, and one of the press' authors has been shortlisted for the Michael Marks Best Pamphlet Award. As Alec states:

- "KFS is committed to promoting new generations of poets working in an alternative literary tradition, and our poets' careers are flourishing. Scott Thurston's continuing support as an academic at Salford is essential to the success of this endeavour. His academic writing and his academic publications, such as the Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry, and his active role in The Other Room, where many KFS poets have performed, give critical validation to individual poets and to schools of poetry. By working together – as publisher and academic – with the universal goal of elevating the profile of alternative literary practice we have succeeded where previous generations have failed: we have brought alternative literature to the attention of mainstream publishers and event organisers."
- Nine of the poets discovered by KFS were published by Bloodaxe, one of the three major poetry publishers in the UK, in a major new anthology called "Dear World and Everyone in It", creating a broad range of financially beneficial opportunities for new innovative writers that simply did not exist before. The press has also hosted four student interns from the research-led undergraduate and postgraduate creative writing programmes. Two of these students have subsequently gained full employment with publishing houses Electric Word (Birmingham) and Elektra Media (Manchester).

Scott's commitment in bringing innovative poetry to new



audiences led him to co-found The Other Room, a reading series devoted to innovative poetry and based in Manchester. The Other Room has had a significant impact on local literary culture, attracting a large number of internationally significant figures to Manchester to perform at the event. The series is therefore very closely informed by the knowledge and contacts Scott has built up through his research as a writer, editor and interviewer. The Other Room is a free to attend and open to all. All performances are recorded and archived on the series website, constructing a rich open resource.

- The Other Room project website acts as a route to existing and further research and a community resource. It includes links to important resources for innovative poetry hosted by academic institutions, supports the development and sale of publications via the many small presses which produce them, and links wider communities to poetic practice and the growing community of poets it supports. The website has had 132,564 hits since January 2009 and currently receives an average of 130 hits per day. It contains around 40 hours of video recordings of performances and interviews with poets.
- Significant local poets who have attended the Other Room regularly since its inception include Nigel Wood, Stephen Emmerson and Richard Barrett and have themselves begun their own publishing enterprises, events and magazines (Sunfish magazine, Department magazine and small press, the Counting Backwards reading series and the Writers Forum North creative writing workshop). All these writers subsequently studied at Salford on the MA Creative Writing: Innovation and Experiment. The annual Other Room anthology has sold around 120 copies and is

collected internationally by a number of important public archives such as the Poetry Collection at SUNY Buffalo, the Sackner Archive in Miami, Florida, the University of Wisconsin, Madison and the Poetry Library in London.

## Participant perspectives

“I have to confess that The Other Room is a kind of lifeline for me: in a city that seems at times to be dominated by performance poetry evenings, it’s a real pleasure to go somewhere where the art of the bleeding obvious isn’t constantly on display.”

“I couldn’t help but imagine all the future work last night’s attendees might go on to produce and the undoubtedly huge number of those attendees who’d look back and remember The Other Room nights as being key to their poetic development...”

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