

Screen Search Fashion

1. Overview of Project

Please confirm that the project is being conducted under the terms agreed with CETLD in the letter of award and any terms and conditions attached.

Screen Search Fashion is a collaborative project between the RCA and the Screen Archive South East (SASE) at University of Brighton. It aims to create an enhanced database, search facility and learning routes focussed on 1920s and 1930s fashion, as an addition to the archive's existing general database. The project unites the SASE archivists' skills in cataloguing, organisation and online data presentation with the RCA fashion historians' knowledge of 1920s and 1930s dress, and its analysis and use within teaching and learning.

The project enables a fascinating resource, which has hitherto been underused for fashion research, to be opened up to a wider audience. Its vast potential for students interested in fashion and dress will be highlighted by the project's outputs, and this will contribute to dress historians' developing interest in everyday fashions.

The project began on 1 September 2008, and has been conducted according to CETLD's terms. Monthly meetings have been held for the project team to monitor progress and plan ongoing tasks. We have also kept in regular email contact, and the project's Research Assistant, Hannah Kauffman has made regular visits to the archive to view films, edit content for the proposed database and ensure that the project's aims are met. The project team has communicated well to produce a firm foundation for the project's progress and a forum in which to discuss the most effective means to achieve our goals. We feel that we have already established a strong collaboration between the two institutions and the individuals involved, which has the potential to continue beyond the boundaries of the current project.

2. Aims and Objectives

Explain any changes to the original aims/objectives outlined in the project plan.

The project's aims and objectives have remained constant and have been validated by both the project team's research and progress on the database so far, and by the positive feedback from students during the three workshops that have been held to date.

3. Targets

State whether the targets set for this reporting period have been met, and the reasons for any delays.

The project has been very carefully planned from proposal stage, and we have not therefore had to alter our schedule. We are pleased to report that all stated targets have been met. There have been some issues to overcome, most notably the

amount of time taken to watch the films and analyse them thoroughly, and the complex technical and design issues raised by such an ambitious database. However, the team has worked well together, any issues have been identified quickly, discussed within the group and resolved efficiently.

Hannah Kauffman has viewed all relevant films for the database, created a list of films to be used in the database, and these films have been transferred to DVD for ease of analysis. Kauffman has assessed these selected films and, in discussion with the rest of the team, produced a list of themes for the proposed 'learning routes.' These routes will bring together clips, stills and analysis of particular themes (e.g. dress for work, leisure or travel) and enable the database user to learn about the clothing and fashions of the period, and to understand how non-fiction film can enhance understanding of dress history.

Elaine Sheppard has designed and constructed templates for Kauffman to use to enter her analysis of individual films, and to begin to build the thematic sections of the site. Sheppard has, in discussion with the project team, identified the most suitable glossary of terms to be used to search the database, and to create 'keywords' for descriptions of the dress seen in the films. She has liaised with a designer who is in the process of creating the site's design in line with the project team's brief.

Three workshops have been held, and although these each produced very useful feedback, they were very poorly attended. This was despite emails and approaches to students and relevant course tutors and administrators. This is undoubtedly due to existing commitments and busy schedules, but has meant we have gained feedback from only a small number of participants. Hannah Kauffman and Rebecca Arnold gave a talk for final year BA (Hons) Fashion Design students at University of Brighton, which was enthusiastically received and encouraged the Course Tutor to set a project related to SASE for the students. This is encouraging, and proof of the project's potential in teaching and learning. Only a tiny number of the students subsequently attended a workshop though. However, the feedback we have gained has been thoughtful and useful, and overall the lack of numbers has not hindered the project's progress or effectiveness so far.

The first workshop at University of Brighton enabled the team to evaluate initial ideas and incorporate feedback in the database's design. For example, the students who attended wanted to see more images and to have a site that was very much image led. We have therefore structured the thematic sections around relevant clips, stills and related imagery and broken up the text to be included, so that it is always related directly to imagery of some kind.

The second and third workshops had the same purpose – to assess the team's ideas for the thematic sections of the database with students from both practice-based and academic courses. We therefore held one workshop with BA (Hons) Fashion Design students at University of Brighton, and one with MA History of Design students from the RCA/V&A. These workshops gave considerable feedback on the relevance of the material to be included and the organisation of this material to make it most appealing, informative and effective as a research and learning tool.

The project is therefore on track to meet its future targets as set out in our Project Proposal Form.

4. Project Outputs

Summarise progress during the reporting period and milestones/deliverables achieved.

The project has met its major milestones for the reporting period. The team has worked steadily through its first three phases, as set out in the Project Proposal Form. We are now in phase four, Kauffman is working on the thematic 'learning routes' to be created for the database, and has further meetings booked with a production engineer to take clips and stills from the selected film. These will be used as a basis for the learning routes.

The web designer is currently working on the template for the site and this will be signed off within the next two weeks. This will enable research carried out to date to be assembled, in light of workshop feedback, to create the database.

5. Project Outcomes

Summarise achievement against objectives, list outcomes and findings to date and any interim conclusions.

The workshops have both validated our aims and objectives for the database, and suggested ways in which the final outputs can be shaped to address students' needs most effectively.

As described above, the workshops underlined the need for an image-led approach to the design of each page and to the ways users would interact with and use the film entries and thematic sections.

Students also stressed their interest in 'everyday' fashion and dress and the unique qualities of non-fiction film as a source for this. This encouraged us to develop our own presentation and analysis of the dress within the resource, and to structure the study day we will hold at the V&A in May around discussion of the evidence that non-fiction film provides for understanding what was worn and how it was worn within a particular period.

The study day will bring together the project team with an invited roster of fashion historians and archivists from other collections to present illustrated talks for students, tutors and interested professionals from the wider field of fashion.

6. Stakeholders

Summarise the project's engagement with stakeholders.

The project has benefited from Chris Mitchell, Teaching and Learning Co-ordinator at the RCA's advice and input in shaping the format of each workshop, and the type and nature of questions we needed to ask at each phase. He has also chaired two of the workshops, and this has aided in the objectivity of the process.

Anne Asha has provided excellent advice and has always been available for consultation about the way to approach various aspects of the project. She also put

the course team in touch with Malcolm McInnes, the BA (Hons) Fashion Course Director, to help us to seek student volunteers for the workshops. This in turn brought valued input from McInnes, the opportunity to talk to his final year students about the project, and his instigation of a project for the students on using SASE's collection as inspiration for their work. Arnold and Kauffman will visit the students to view the work they create for the project.

7. Risk Analysis

Summarise any problems that have occurred and any mitigating action taken.

8. Intellectual Property Rights

Summarise progress clearing any third-party rights.

Permission was cleared with Worthing Museum for the use of images taken in its storeroom of garments from its dress collection.

All of the selected SASE material is available for use within the terms of this project.

9. Project Management

Note any changes in project staff or their roles since the beginning of the project. Explain briefly any problems or gaps with staffing and the effect this has had on the project schedule.

In March 2009 Kauffman obtained a full time post at the National Portrait Gallery. This meant that she would not be able to fulfil her role within the project as set out in the Proposal. We have therefore asked Carly Eck, a final year MA student on the History of Design RCA/V&A course to step into the role of Research Assistant for the rest of the project. Kauffman has made excellent progress in her work on the project, and has generously offered to complete the film editing process, and give her proposed paper at the Study Day. This means that Eck can focus on research and writing for the film entries and thematic learning routes.

The course team feel that Eck is a highly suitable candidate for this role, as she has a strong interest and background in fashion history, and has undertaken research on the 1920s and 1930s at both BA and MA levels. She will work closely with Arnold to ensure continuity within the written content for the resource, and will also spend a day in Brighton with the rest of the project team to acquaint her with SASE's collection and the project's nature and progress.

Although the project team is obviously sad that Kauffman will not remain for the project's completion, we are very grateful for her hard work and dedication. In addition, we feel that Eck will make a valuable contribution to the project's success.

10. Budget

Summarise expenditure to date and provide reasons for any changes from original budget plan.

Spending has followed the pattern set out in our Project Proposal Form. The only notable change was the need to move money budgeted for catering for workshops into the budget for the website designer. This was because he charged more money than had originally been quoted when the Proposal was put together.

It was also necessary to purchase Filemaker Pro software for Kauffman to use for her research and data organisation. Funding for this was found from money saved on train tickets to Brighton.

12. Evaluation

Note any evaluation results during the reporting period.

Evaluation has taken place after each workshop. The workshops have given the project team useful and informative feedback at key moments in the project's progress. We have used the feedback as a basis for discussion within our monthly meetings to prompt reflection on work to date, and to integrate into our future plans.

In general the students enjoyed being able to see actual film footage in the form of stills and clips on the proposed resource, in combination with detailed written information.

They thought the clear and succinct style of the site made it easy to navigate and to understand. They liked the level and pitch of contextual written information and felt that it enabled them to approach the subject at varying levels of depth depending on their own requirements.

Aspects of the proposed resource that the students thought could be improved or expanded upon included the subdivision of the site – that is making the subsections of the written material more defined. They also suggested altering the visual design of the site so that it is clearer to the user when they are in a section of SASE – as is the case with the film entries, or of the Screen Search fashion area – as with the thematic learning routes.

These remarks have been taken into consideration for the design and content of the Screen Search Fashion site.

13. Dissemination Plan

Report progress against plan, noting dissemination carried out, whether it was successful in your view and any publicity the project has received during the reporting period.

The Study Day 'Fashion on Screen' has been organised for 21 May at the Lecture Theatre at the V&A Museum. A programme advertising this event has been sent to a wide range of contacts in colleges, universities, museums and archives.

The Study Day itself will also provide an important platform from which to disseminate information about the project and its outcomes to its core constituency of fashion students and professionals.

We are going to write a short piece on the study Day for the next CETLD newsletter, to alert other members of the CETLD community to the project's activities.

Kauffman and Arnold have given a talk on the project to the BA (Hons) Fashion Design students, and will go to see the results of the SASE-related project that these students will undertake.

Kauffman and Arnold will also give a talk for the CETLD seminar series in April 2009.