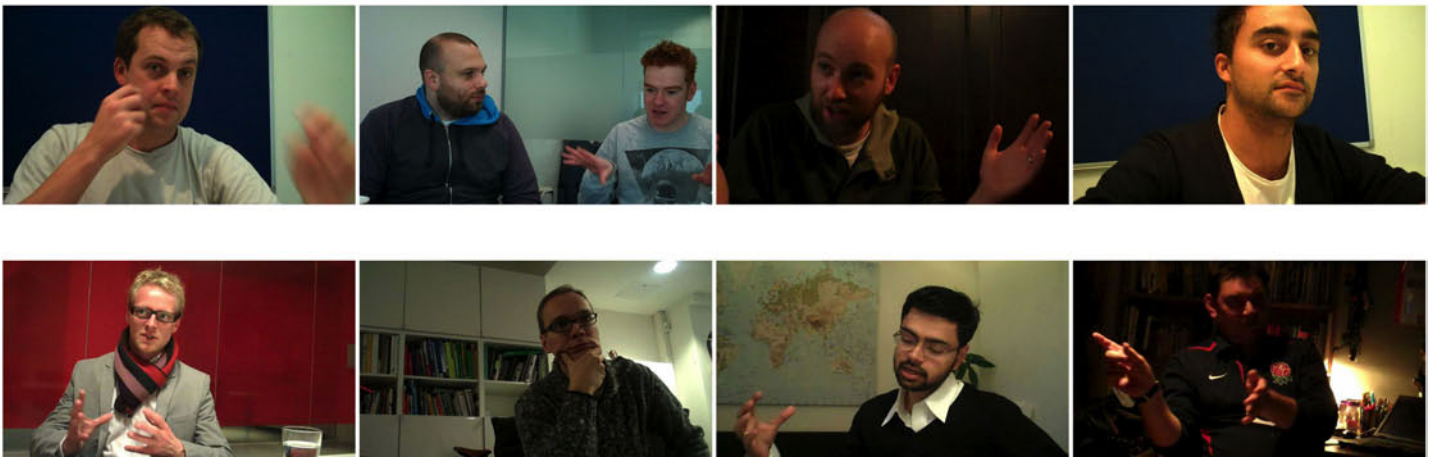




## New Design Directions In The Digital Age

Report For School Distribution Only. Version 1.4, 01.11.10





When knowledge increases in any field,  
there are several possible responses:  
increased use of reference materials  
and systems, increasing specialization,  
and increasing need for collaboration  
among those specialists.

Fried, 2001:10



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# Brief

## Focus

The purpose of the secondment is to undertake a comprehensive, analytical study of the overall landscape of the areas of practice encompassed by digital media, interaction and user experience design, related professions and student applicant markets to enable a full understanding of how the School should develop a media centre. The ambition is to develop a distinctive profile and enhanced visibility in the sector, underpinned and supported by critical engagement in interdisciplinary / multidisciplinary research practice with a view to developing a suite of specialist MA(s) and CPD programmes that would reflect a portfolio of new opportunities in Newcastle and London, to both complement and extend the reach of the School's existing provision.

## Activities

To research, review and evaluate:

1. Market intelligence to inform focused marketing and academic development
2. Dialogue with practitioners, employers and professional bodies – mapping professional needs – relevance, currency and customisation of content in response to identified client need/s
3. Regional, national and international players and potential collaborators
4. Interdisciplinary research informed learning practices - opportunities for collaborative programmes/ partnerships and projects in association with industry, institutions and service providers
5. Industry-focused learning experience, WBL, internships and an industry mentoring
6. Global learning environments – without borders / across borders
7. Strategic needs - corporate (public and private) environments
8. Employability and evolving needs – changing career aspirations and lateral moves in mid-career / changing occupations
9. Content, structure and patterns of delivery
10. Modes, location / sites for delivery
11. Existing curriculum & staff expertise / research-professional practice
12. Relevant user theories (psychological, social etc.) and their relevance to experience design



*City Road, London, EC1 29.10.09*

*Itinerary: Interviews with Bibliotheque Design, Radarstation and Imagination*

# Executive Summary

The research project set out to review and evaluate a very broad range of design activity that encompassed digital media, interaction, user experience design and related professions. The ambition was to analyse them through multiple educational focuses from Learning & Teaching and Research through to Enterprise and Continuing Professional Development (CPD), with a view to creating a distinctive institutional profile for the School of Design.

As the research developed the project found its own voice with which to connect its ambition to stakeholders and interviewees: New Design Directions in the Digital Age.

## Key Findings

1. The 'digital revolution' is somewhat inseparable concept from 'globalisation' and the 'new economy' so when analysing new design opportunities as a result of new technology, there are often important global and economic ramifications.
2. Craft skills are digital too. Many new design skills are continually being developed on the dissolving borders of other disciplines e.g. computing, demanding that we re-evaluate our notions of germane design skills.
3. 'Digital context' is challenging our conventions of design practice and processes.
4. 'Design strategy' has become a necessity for design agencies hoping to deliver highly valued products and services to their clients.
5. The 'digital age' is questioning design consultancy business models as traditional fee revenue diminishes in favour of equity-based models.
6. The digital age is demanding designers (and design educators) with hybrid skills sets, who work well in multi-disciplinary teams to deliver projects that are growing in complexity.
7. Universities need to embrace e-learning and digitally enabled delivery to support face-to-face learning and promote their value in an increasingly global and competitive educational market place.
8. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is an informal and ad hoc arrangement for most designers and is currently supplied by professional bodies and independent providers rather than academic institutions.



## Key Recommendations

1. There is little room for new undergraduate programmes so we need to **re-develop the current curricula** where necessary to acknowledge new digital crafts and contexts.
2. Consider an **integrated module framework** at undergraduate to deal with flux in student numbers and support pathways in programmes e.g. an Interaction pathway for BA (Hons) Design For Industry.
3. Develop an internationally recognised **Communication Design** programme at postgraduate level or explore redeveloping the current undergraduate Graphic Design programme to accommodate this important growth area.
4. **Connect experiences** through clearly sign-posted vertical and horizontal pathways between undergraduate and postgraduate programmes for students and staff.
5. **Named Masters** that reflect the greater complexity of design in the digital age e.g. MA Interaction & Service Design or MA Branding & Strategy.
6. **Review MA modes and locations of delivery** (in the light of new technologies) to encourage more learners to participate in more flexible ways.
7. Explore an **MA Bursary** scheme subsidised through lower undergraduate bursaries.
8. Build **open access online courses/programmes** for all to help current students and attract future students.
9. **Join the 'Cumulus' University Network** to become part of a formal knowledge-sharing network: sharing of ideas, research, staff and students.
10. Explore **new research themes or groups** such as Digital Brands, Design Enterprise, Designing for Devices, and Experiential Design.
11. To support future ambitions within digital media, **technical skills and know-how** will need developing at both **academic and technician levels**.
12. Investigate introducing a **New Research Model** to encourage collaborative and co-operative design research practice.
13. Develop an Annual **Communication Design Conference**.
14. To develop **CPD Workshops** quickly, we need to work with strategic partners or endorse 'suppliers'.
15. Consider building a **Design Skills Academy** specialising in Interactive Media supported by Skillset.
16. **Target in-house design teams** and design managers for CPD.
17. Create **'White label'** or partner programmes for design agency partners.

# Introduction

For the majority of individuals in post-industrial societies, the digital revolution – the transition from analogue and mechanical electronics to digital technology – has had a significant influence on how we live, work and play. For design, its impact has enabled change and create new opportunities, as we have witnessed it revolutionise analogue processes such as printing and prototyping, formed new disciplines and practices, and provided new problems for design to resolve.

According to a recent design survey 57% of all design agencies surveyed offered ‘multimedia/new media’ expertise (BDI, 2008), a discipline that barely existed fifteen years earlier when the web was first launched.

Reflecting on the trends in design practice and developments in design education identified during this research project, it is clear that the digital revolution has created both opportunities and challenges for the School of Design. What is less clear is a distinction between digital and traditional forms of design and design education. Whilst there are easily identifiable digital opportunities and challenges e.g. The rise in importance of Human Computer Interaction (HCI) and complexity of providing online education resources, the reality is that digital has permeated and revolutionised many activities and practices in most businesses, and in this respect design education is no different.

Therefore when making recommendations, I am conscious that at times I am making general recommendations rather than exclusively digital ones. The recommendations cover the breadth of the School’s activities from Learning & Teaching through Research & Enterprise to Business Development and in depth from Undergraduate through Postgraduate and beyond.

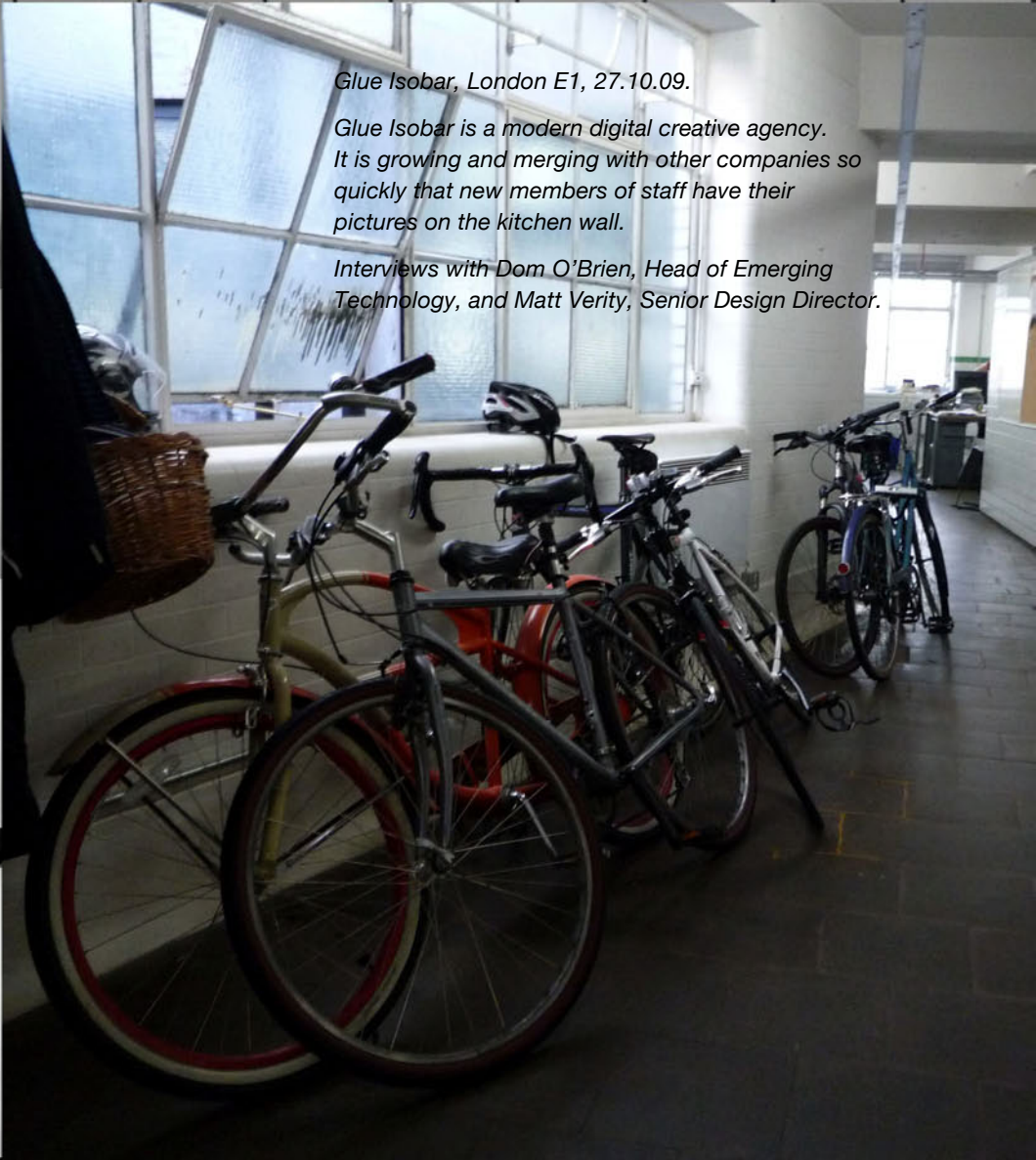
## Definitions

### **Digital Age**

During this report, the term ‘digital age’ will be referred to in preference to the digital revolution as it perhaps better describes an enduring state of change in society, culture and economics rather than a watershed moment. Therefore the ‘digital age’ for the purposes of the report will be defined in language and chronological terms as the crossover point when the change from analogue to digital technology (the digital revolution) enabled individuals to transfer information freely (the information age). Perhaps the most recognisable defining point is 1992 when the World Wide Web was first released to the public.

### **Communication Design**

For clarity and ease, the term ‘Communication Design’ will be used throughout this report to define areas of practice that include Visual Communication, Graphic Design, Digital Media, Interaction and User Experience Design. It also acknowledged that industrial design has a significant overlap with these identified areas of practice, and subjects such as Service Design and Games Design are also included under this broad umbrella.



*Glue Isobar, London E1, 27.10.09.*

*Glue Isobar is a modern digital creative agency. It is growing and merging with other companies so quickly that new members of staff have their pictures on the kitchen wall.*

*Interviews with Dom O'Brien, Head of Emerging Technology, and Matt Verity, Senior Design Director.*



# Methodology

The topic outlined tends to suggest that many of the factors affecting the design education have been created at an institutional level e.g. government economic policy, public bodies, professional associations and technological advances, however, many of the reports highlighted throughout this report draw upon the views of networks of leading professionals. Moreover, the new economic phenomena discussed would not have been possible without the active engagement of global producer-consumers or 'prosumers' (Lister, 2009). Therefore the ontological perspective taken will be one where the world is created by a set of social practices or the mores of a community. The complementary epistemology will be a social constructivist perspective.

The research focuses on field of 'Communication Design' that encompasses areas of practice including Visual Communication, Graphic Design, Digital Media and Interaction Design. With regard to the actual methodology chosen, the research seeks to identify the challenges and opportunities for design education through primary and secondary analysis of design trends, and first-hand interviews with experienced creatives, educators and design related professionals from renowned international agencies and institutions in the UK and Europe.

Over thirty semi-structured interviews were carried out. The number and nature of the interviewees directly relates to areas of practice from different professional perspectives: practicing design, design education, public bodies and professional associations.

Over a dozen key questions were asked during the interviews and split between three topics on the impact of the digital age: how has professional practice been affected; what are the new opportunities for design; and what are the resultant challenges for design education.

Whilst there was a semi-structured approach to both the interview questions and choice of interviewees, it must be stressed that this was in the interest of gaining the best available qualitative information rather than for the purposes of quantitative statistical analysis. To this end, the balance of the questions between the three topics and phrasing of the actual questions varied slightly in order to elicit the best qualitative insights based on the interviewees' professional expertise.



*Bibliothèque Design, London EC2, 28.10.09.*

*A Graphic Design consultancy that uses digital to facilitate faster work and research. Tim Beard, partner, was interviewed for this research project to give a traditional graphic design perspective on the impact of the digital age.*



# Learning & Teaching

The research project has investigated learning & teaching through a number of focuses from new programme development, programme content, delivery formats and structures, and learning environments. Research has involved gaining market intelligence through a variety of methods from quantitative analysis on programmes, programme titling, subject clustering and more in-depth qualitative analysis of trends, reports and first hand interviews with design practitioners and academics.

The overall conclusion is that there are opportunities to introduce new programme content at undergraduate level, new programmes at postgraduate level, and new challenges for the School to consider in its delivery through e-learning environments.

## Programme Development

### Our current undergraduate offer

At present we have nine undergraduate programmes in the School (not including Transportation Design), or three programmes per undergraduate academic group. If 3D Design, Fashion and Graphic Design are considered the 'craft-based' homes of each group it could be argued that the other 6 more 'context-based' programmes fan out to offer a complete circle of programme opportunities for prospective undergraduates – see Illustrations 1 & 2 (next page).

Whilst Illustration 2 offers a simple and immediate overview of the programmes and possible relationships, it does not accurately reflect the complexity of present associations and overlaps. Nor more importantly does it reveal any potential gaps or opportunities.

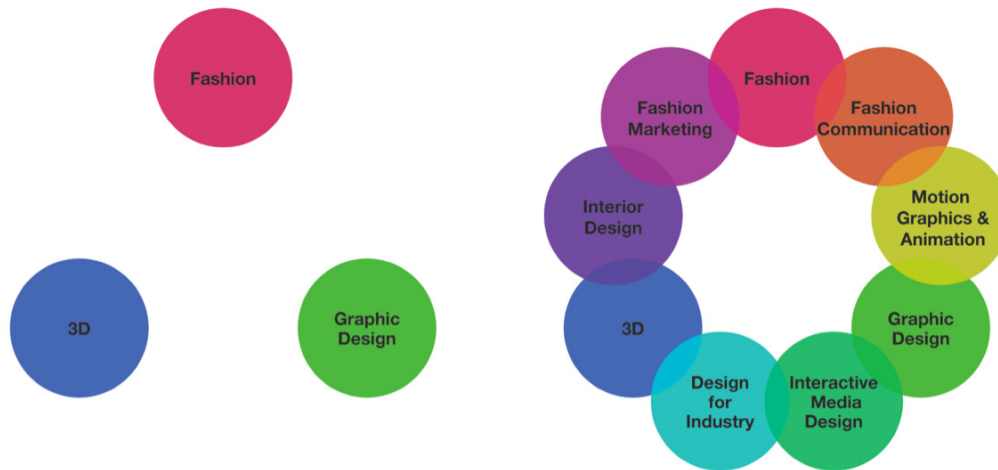
Illustration 3 perhaps gives a more accurate picture of the overlaps in content and relationships between the programmes. Visually there appears to be few gaps between the programmes, so new opportunities would appear to lie at the edges where design meets other disciplines or through the re-analysis of present programme content. Focusing on the broad field of 'Communication Design' new opportunities will now be explored in more depth.

### Northumbria programmes

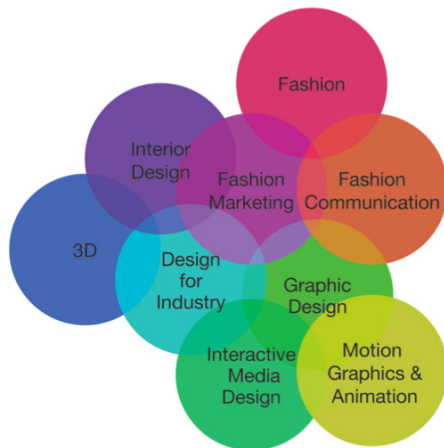
There are many more design-related programmes at Northumbria University than those that live within the School of Design. From 2011 there will be 21 programmes offering design at Northumbria according to UCAS. In addition to the present 3 VCIMD programmes, which also share overlaps with DFI, Fashion Marketing and Fashion Communication, there are also five other Communication Design related programmes at Northumbria University:

Finding clear space to create new undergraduate programmes in the natural directions of Science or Arts would appear already crowded, and difficult if student interest is already limited – see Illustration 4.

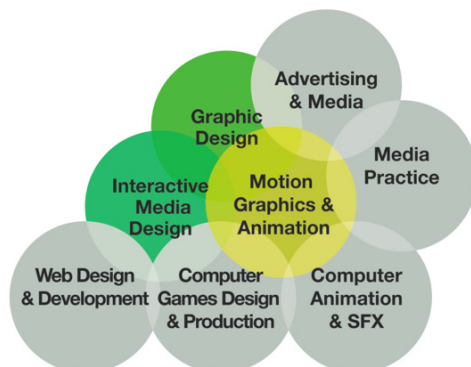




*Illustration 1 & 2: Undergraduate programme associations*



*Illustration 3: Undergraduate programme connections*



*Illustration 4: Northumbria Communication Design related programmes*

## National undergraduate overview

To understand the general appeal of Communication Design programmes from a potential undergraduate perspective becomes a little clearer when searching through the UCAS website.

A selection of Communication Design related search terms (keywords or phrases) were typed into UCAS's 'course finder' with the following results – see Chart 1 (next page).

Without the benefit of actual application data for these programmes, it would be reasonable (if not accurate) to assume that the number of programmes reflects general interest by applicants.

Whilst some subjects such as 'Games' or 'Web Design' are common, there are concerns over whether they are too transient, lack a 'discipline spine' or provide graduates with employable levels of breadth and depth.

Design is one area where the Games Industry has been quite critical of some of the courses. I think they feel that some of the courses entice students to come to the University without teaching them enough specific skills to get a job in the Games Industry at the end of it.

Carri Cunliffe | Head of Sector Development  
Codeworks Connect (One North East), Sunderland

Looking for opportunity in more specialist areas through distinct programme titles would also raise concerns in terms of viability:

1. **Experience Design** – Only 4 programmes were found when searching for 'Experience Design', three of which use the term to relate to 'work experience' and the only one that uses 'Experience Design' as the programme title was still subject to validation (University of Kent).
2. **Interaction Design** – Some disciplines have completely disappeared, there are no 'Interaction Design' labelled programmes left in the country, nor are there any 'Service Design' programmes at undergraduate level.
3. **Sonic Design** – There are no undergraduate programmes titled 'Sonic Design' however, those that specialise in this area are often scaffolded by more complementary sound related programmes to be resource efficient and sustainable.

## Programme Clusters (International)

Chart 2 (next page) shows the number of Communication Design related programmes that a selection of British and International Universities offer.

There are two significant observations:

1. There is no apparent connection between the number of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes offered.
2. British institutions appear to offer far greater range of programmes than in North America, Australia and Europe.

Chart 1: UK Undergraduate Programmes (UCAS)

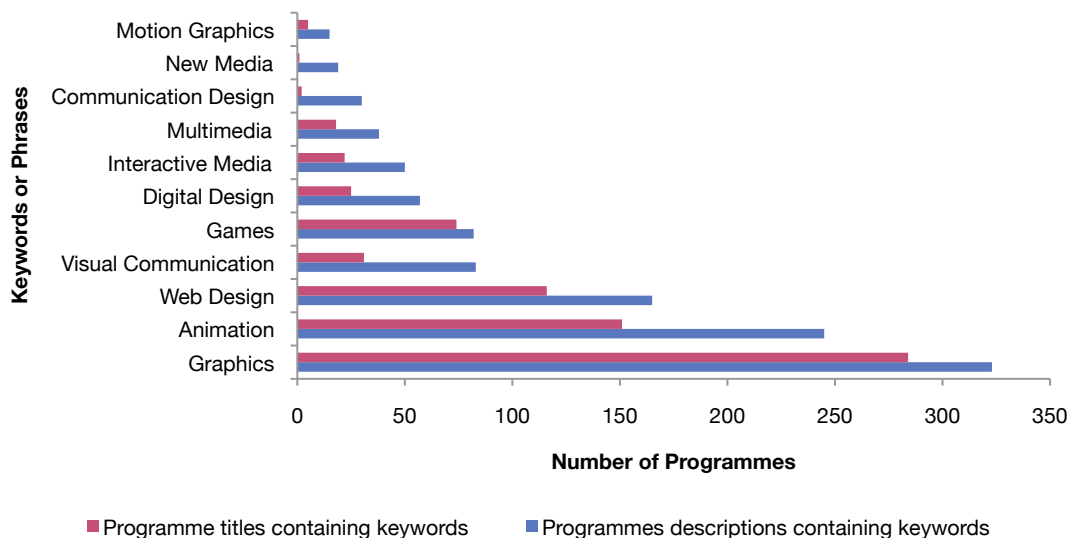
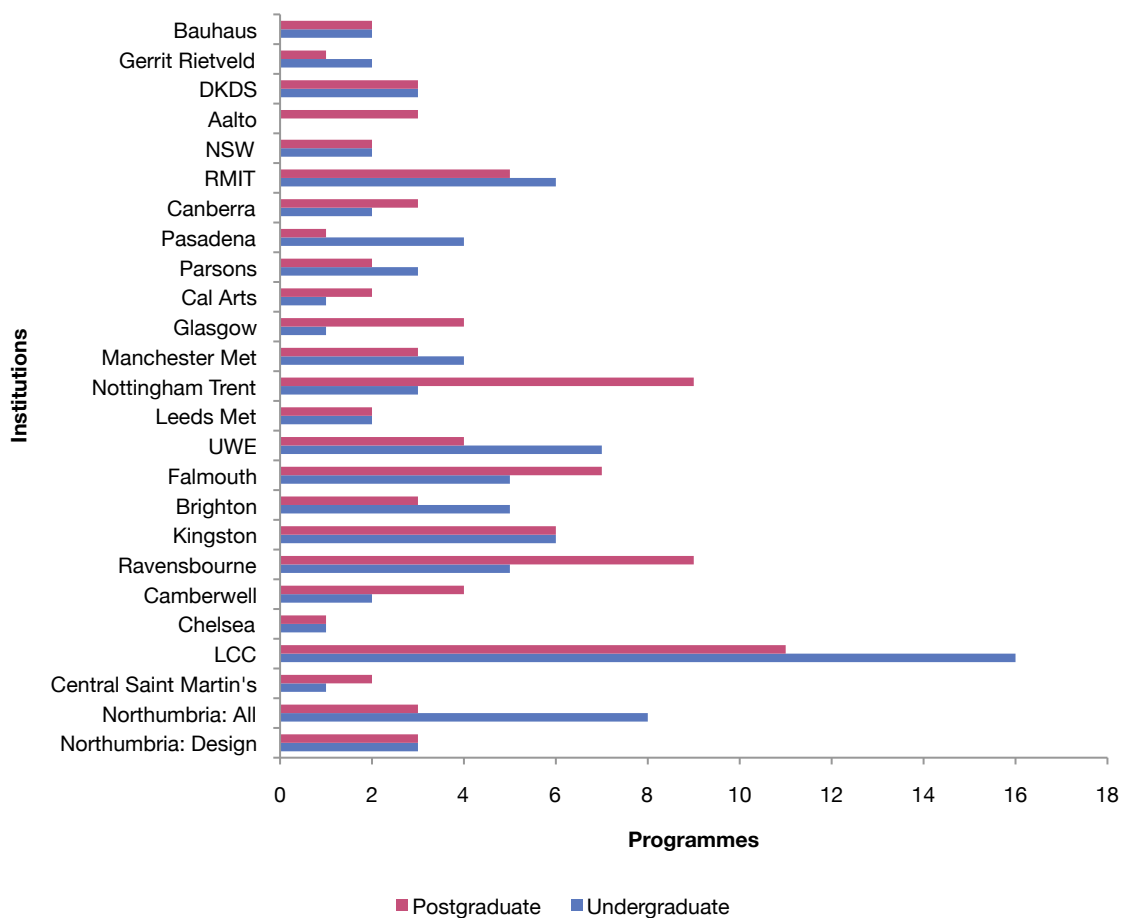


Chart 2: Communication Design Related Programmes





## Programme Clusters (National)

Table 1 (next page) shows Northumbria's portfolio of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in relation to other UK institutions. Northumbria appears to offer more undergraduate programmes and less diverse postgraduate programmes than the other institutions represented.

Other observations:

1. Whilst there are firm overlaps between programmes at other institutions, some of our programmes appear to be in internal competition.
2. Our School's own three VCIMD programmes are inline with many of our competitors e.g. Falmouth or Manchester Met in offering a broad Graphic Design programme and then two more specialist programmes with an interaction and animation themes. The benefit of the separate programmes is that they are more explicit and allow for deeper exploration of specialist disciplines. The drawback is they may struggle to recruit in significant numbers.
3. The alternative strategy is exemplified by Central St. Martin's (CSM) or Glasgow where they have a single broad programme with specialist pathways. The benefit of this approach is that they are attractive to many students seeking a potential breadth of experience. The drawbacks are less depth in specialisms and more prone to resourcing issues based on flux in student interests.
4. The University of the West of England (UWE) model which is similar to London College of Communication (LCC) is perhaps a halfway house where there are named pathways that share a common framework.
5. With regard to Postgraduate, we don't have an explicit range of specialist degrees like our competitors, and since we are currently operating a framework to support specialisms there appears to be no logical reason why we are not offering more overt named degrees.

Table 1: UK Programme Clusters

<i>Institutions</i>	<i>Undergraduate</i>	<i>Postgraduate</i>
<b>Northumbria University</b>	BA (Hons) Graphic Design BA (Hons) Interactive Media Design BA (Hons) Motion Graphics & Animation Design BSc (Hons) Computer Animation and Digital SFX BSc (Hons) Computer Games Design & Production BSc (Hons) Web Design and Development BA (Hons) Advertising and Media BA (Hons) Media Production	MA Design MA Design Practice MA/MSc Multidisciplinary Design Innovation
<b>Central St Martins</b>	BA (Hons) Graphic Design	MA Communication Design Dip Character Animation
<b>Falmouth</b>	Digital Animation BA (Hons) Illustration BA (Hons) Advertising BA (Hons) Digital Media BA (Hons) Graphic Design BA (Hons)	Graphic Design MA Creative Advertising MA Illustration: Authorial Practice MA
<b>Glasgow</b>	Visual Communication	M.Des in Communication Design M.Des in Design Innovation M.Des in Graphic Design M.Des in Illustration
<b>Manchester Met</b>	BA (Hons) Creative Multimedia BA (Hons) Graphic Design BA (Hons) Illustration with Animation BA (Hons) Interactive Arts	(gdp) Creative Business Development MA Design MA Design and Art Direction Menterprise in Art and Design
<b>Nottingham Trent</b>	BA (Hons) Graphic Design BA (Hons) Multimedia BA (Hons) Marketing, Design and Communication	MA Graphic Design MA Branding and Identity Design MA Illustration MA Motion Graphic Design MA Art Direction MA Interaction Design
<b>Ravensbourne</b>	BA (Hons) Animation Production BA (Hons) Design (Interactions) BA (Hons) Graphic Design BA (Hons) Motion Graphics BA (Hons) Web Media Production and Management *	MA Animation Futures MA Communication Design MA/MSc Interactive Digital Media MA/MSc Interactive Product Futures MA Moving Image MA Visual Effects MA/MSc Web Applications, Web Apps. Development Master of Innovation, Master of Fine Arts MSc Applied Technologies - Rapid Prototyping and Digital Technologies
<b>UWE</b>	BA(Hons) Graphic Design BA(Hons) Animation BA(Hons) Graphic Design with Animation BA(Hons) Illustration BA(Hons) Illustration with Animation BA(Hons) Media Practice BA(Hons) Media Practice with Animation	MA Art, Media and Design by Project MA Animation MA Graphic Arts MA Media: Practice and Culture

## Recommendations

### 1. No New Undergraduate Programmes

No new undergraduate programmes required just content revision opportunities. We already have a crowded internal market for Communication Design related programmes and the undergraduate market is either not willing or mature enough to accept more uniquely titled programmes. We need to differentiate through programme content not programme titling.

### 2. Integrated Framework & Named Programmes

Interaction and Animation are important growth areas in industry yet the struggle to recruit for interaction-based programmes is a national issue made more difficult by the internal competition from the School of Computing, Engineering and Information Sciences (CEIS). We have a similar internal competition issue for animation with both the School of Arts and Social Sciences (ASS) and CEIS. If recruitment continues to be an issue there are a number of options:

- a. Re-title: BA (hons) Graphic Design with Interaction and BA (hons) Graphic Design with Animation.
- b. Build an integrated framework across the whole of VCIMD and offer the current titles.

In addition we should drop the word 'Design' from Motion Graphics & Animation, as 'Animation Design' is an unused and ungainly term.

### 3. DFI Interaction Pathway

DFI also needs to resource an Interaction pathway, working with VCIMD and the new SIF specialists to provide a more integrated offering should do this. Again a shared interactive framework with Interactive Media Design might be the answer but I would be hesitant to offer this as a named award because it will both dilute the DFI brand and there are less 3D interaction orientated undergraduates than there are Graphics orientated ones.

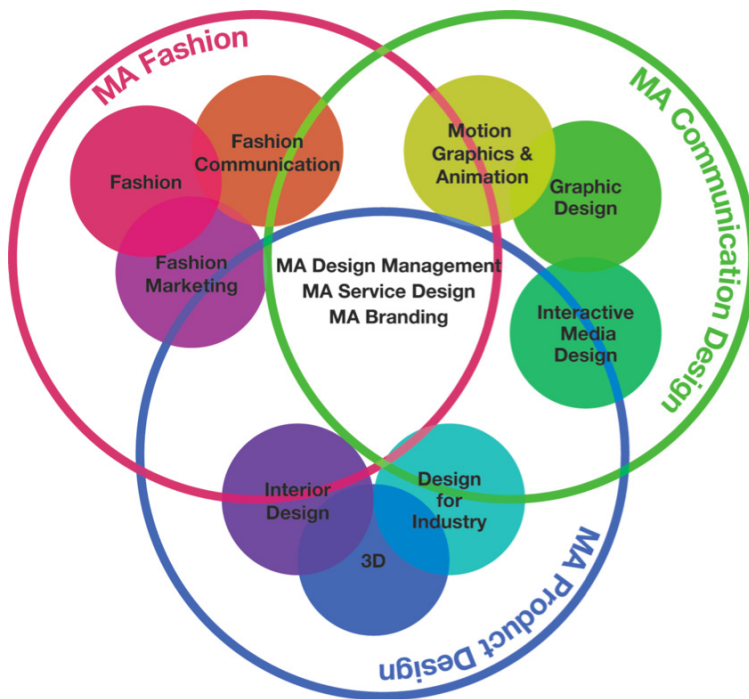
### 4. Named MA Programmes

We simply need to be bolder and title our awards to attract more students and create post-graduates specialisms worthy of research. We already have an integrated framework that supports specialism so why not be more overt?

### 5. Programme Mapping

We need a clear road map that easily connects undergraduate and postgraduate study for both students and staff. If undergraduate tutors are not involved in the development of postgraduate how are the programmes, staff and students really going to grow?





*Illus. 5: MA Named Programmes*

*Please note that this diagram is only indicative for discussion purposes.  
The principle of having generic titles for each general subject discipline and  
specialist titles for programmes that would attract from all disciplines would  
provide one logical solution.*

# Programme Content

## Introduction

Notions of new craft skills and a new digital design context came through strongly during the research from industry reports, interviews and the analysis competitor's programmes content. Hybrid design skill sets, design strategy, business management and enterprise were particularly desirable as industry reacts to increased global competition and the automation of more replicable traditional design skills – see Illustration 5 (next page).

Looking at the School of Design's own 'First Destination' statistics for graduates – Chart 3 (next page), those programmes that are more heavily reliant on traditional crafts e.g. 3D, Fashion and Graphic Design appear to perform less well in the job market than their most 'context orientated' cousins e.g. DFI, Fashion Marketing and Multimedia Design.

## Craft Skills

I don't think craft is about the material and processes – that's the trap. Craft is the mental attitude to whatever you're sat in front of at the time. It's as likely to be a computer as a letterpress.

Prof. David Crow | Acting Dean  
Faculty of Art & Design, Manchester Metropolitan University

There was broad consensus that craft skills were digital too, thus sharing Richard Sennett's view of modern craftsmanship (2008), and whilst there were many of advocates of John Maeda's view (2004) that artists and designers should embrace digital crafts such as programming, others still felt that these skills were better left to specialist developers.

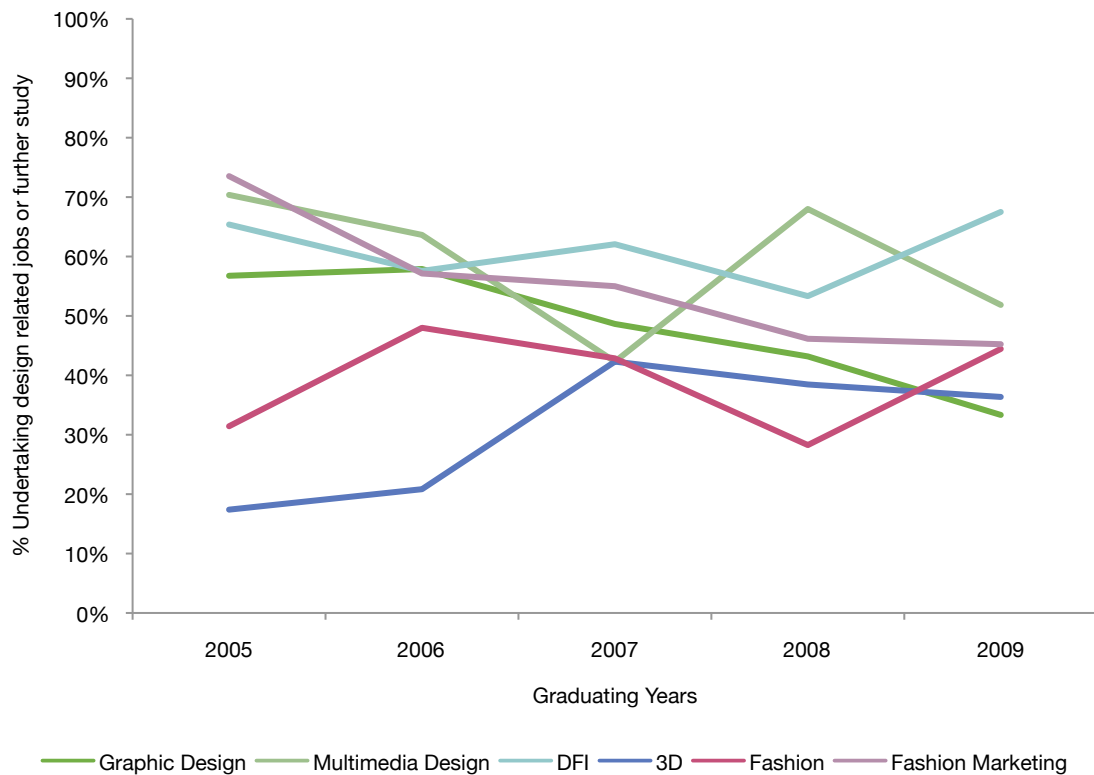
To assume that the only model for art technology is through collaboration between artist and technologist, is to gamble the entire future of our culture upon the custom of figuratively grafting artists' eyes and senses directly onto technologists' hands and minds. I am told that the beauty of such collaboration is a result that neither artist nor the technologist can expect. I fail to see the merits of an approach based upon mere serendipity.

Maeda, 2000:iv



Illustration 5: Vistaprint are a leading automated online design service specialising in Corporate Identity with an enterprise value of US\$ 2.3bn.

Chart 3: First Destination Survey





## Design Strategy

Now I think to be in our business you are expected to come with strategy to get the gig to design something. It's expanded organically and the expectation is there now. There are very few companies that pick up a brief and design a product – I think.

David Fisher | Director, Seymour-Powell, London

Strategy is becoming a central aspect of design agencies' offer. Understanding both the business and design strategy behind how brands, products and services work is as vital as the designing of artefacts - some may argue more so. According to Damian Ferrar, Director of Digital at Imagination, strategists are an essential part of a design team in order to harness emergent trends, and he is taking on many more graduates who have a learnt appreciation of strategy. If our graduates don't understand strategy, others' will. Design Strategy would make a great research theme for the School and a provide unique selling point, a subject that will be returned to in the Research section of this report.

## Complementary professional skills

Universities should stop focusing on training students solely for creative positions and broaden their offer to include different pathways in management, planning and strategy where there is a dearth of talent and plenty of opportunities for the creatively minded.

Alistair Sim | Director, The Chase, Manchester

Complementary professional skills such as business management and enterprise are highly valued by design agencies and will help those less talented student gain managing roles in good agencies where these skills are thin. Panu Korhonen, Senior User Experience Designer at Nordkapp in Helsinki, contends that marketing skills are also important an aid to the design process, since more design involves co-creation and understanding audiences. Therefore providing classes in marketing or cognitive psychology would prove very beneficial.

The Design Council (UK) have also identified complementary skills 'such as business management and communication, alongside experience of working in multi-disciplinary teams and knowledge of global markets and supply chains' to fill recognised skills gaps in industry and give graduates more explicit and transferable skills (Design Skills Advisory Panel, 2007:5-6).

## New workshops, courses or modules

The suggestions opposite are for potential new workshops, courses or modules at undergraduate or postgraduate level. Some are perhaps covered by modules or workshops that currently exist, others completely new. however all them are a direct response to the digital revolution and global design issues.

From discussions with staff there is concern whether there is room in the undergraduate timetable for new modules or moreover, whether some of the topics covered would be better suited to individual lectures, short courses or workshops within existing modules.

### ***Suggested workshops, courses or modules***

Note, 'Macro' and 'Micro' Levels are referred to order to represent broad and narrow focuses on connected subject matter.

1. **Design Innovation & Strategy** – Using design as the innovation tool to create new business plans and strategies (Macro Level).
2. **Design Enterprise & Commercialisation** – Taking an existing product or service and maximising its commercial value. (Micro Level).
3. **Design Business Management** – Practical knowledge and skills in running a design business (Macro Level).
4. **Design Project Management** – Running a project: accounting, management, resourcing and communication skills (Micro Level).
5. **Design Management for Convergent & Digital Media** – Specialist course that looks at the business and project management of complex design projects that often require agile development pathways and partnerships (Macro & Micro Level)
6. **User Centred Design** – Provides insights and practical guidance on imbedding a User-Centred design methodology (Macro Level)
7. **User Experience Design** – This is a course provides an in-depth hands on experience of information architecture, 'wire-framing' and related interaction and service design methodologies and techniques (Micro Level)
8. **New Rapid Prototyping Methodologies** – Rapid prototyping that uses new technologies and low-tech methods is revolutionising the design process as the speed and relatively low cost in development is allowing designers and users instant feedback on concepts and ideas...
9. **Digital Design for Environments & Experiences** – A workshop in designing and developing digital artefacts for physical and sensory experiences.
10. **Designing for a Global Market** – This course explores design issues directly related to globalisation from language and semantics right through to marketing and production.
11. **Responsible Design Practice** – This topic could be a lecture series or course design to help designers re-examine their working in the light of environmental, ethical and economic issues.
12. **Social Design Practice** – This course moves on from the Responsible Design debate to looking at how design can proactively explore and promote social, environmental, economic and political change.
13. **Inter-disciplinary Design & Innovation** – Sound obvious and something we already do but arguably could do better... Do students and staff really make the link between using inter-disciplinary teams to truly innovate rather than simply pooling skills?

## Communication Design

The digital age and a growing service culture suggest that we are moving into a world of 'positions' and services rather than slogans and artefacts. In the US, Europe and Australia leading institutions such as Parsons and RMIT are resolving this by moving away from Graphic Design towards Communication Design to better reflect current practice and societies' needs.

Note, a Communication Design programme at undergraduate level would have a much more specific diet than the sweeping definition used at the beginning of this report!

Rather than design a new programme, I would suggest we build on Graphic Design's long established reputation and work with the programme team to build an explicit communication backbone by focusing its teaching on brand, communications, information, service and enterprise to reflect modern practice and give it's students real value in a highly competitive marketplace. I would propose that we retain the present programme title as the UK undergraduate market is not ready for a wholesale name change yet.

As an interim measure I would suggest that Communication Design is considered as an MA title since it would have greater appeal than just those studying Graphic Design and could utilise some of the module and course ideas listed above.

Note, I'm concerned that if we don't make Communication Design explicit, Arts & Social Sciences could easily join the dots between its Advertising & Media and Mass Communication & Business programmes. I have a similar concern for contestable terms such as 'Branding'.

## Named Masters programmes

Echoing a point made in the Programme Development section. The research project reveals that the business models, strategies and practices of design have been fundamentally changed as a result of the digital age and this is a serious opportunity for MA study and research. Branding, Communication and Services are hot topics and from talking to colleagues at the London and Southern colleges have little issue in recruiting e.g. MA Branding & Strategy at Brunel University has three figure recruitment and MA Service Design at Plymouth University recruits about 20 students per year.

## Masters programmes and delivery locations

We need to consider quickly whether the London programmes are distinct from those offered in Newcastle or whether there will be room for programmes offered in two locations.

If the former is required, Communication Design related programmes in London should focus on learners requiring accreditation for present working practice, careers changing experiences, strategic or management knowledge and skills.

We should consider building courses in partnership with design related institutions for affinity marketing purposes e.g. Kingston University currently work in partnership with the Design Museum to deliver MA Curating Contemporary Design.

D&AD might be a good potential partner although they have recently started working to deliver short courses with Hyper Island.







## MA bursaries

Undergraduate bursaries reward academic success but why pay them in cash when we could offer a number of MA bursaries to high achievers instead? Now that we have a change in the University Executive shouldn't we try and change this? It would be more in line with current University thinking?

## Staffing

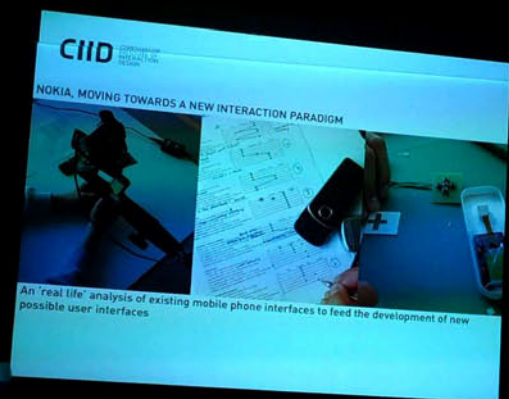
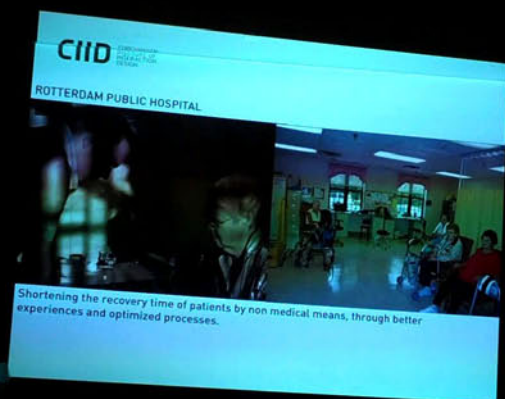
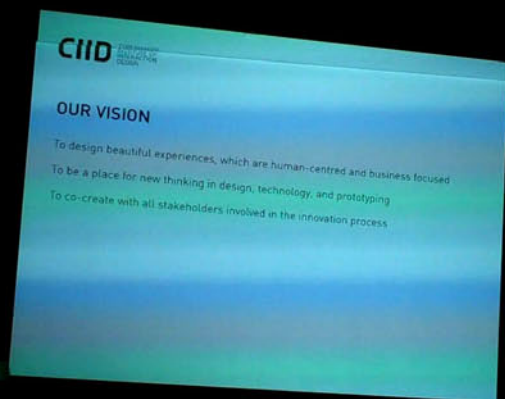
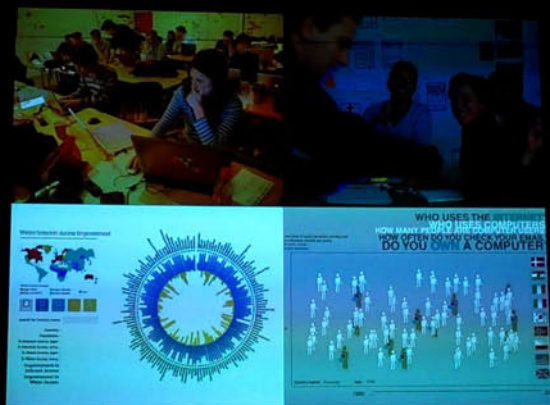
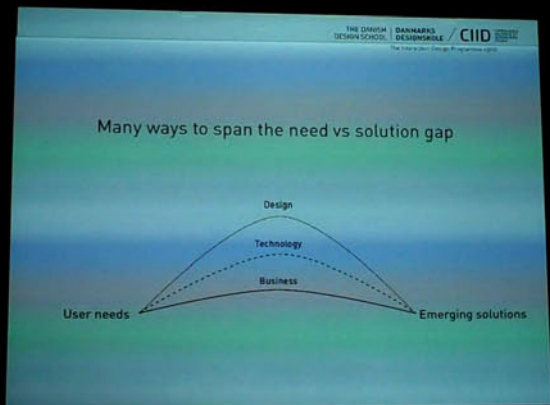
In order to facilitate learning, teaching and research for the latest developments in digital design e.g. processing or electronic rapid prototyping, we need staff with new digital craft skills.

Whilst there is capacity for current staff to undertake training, we need to think more strategically about both academic and technical staffing. We currently have no technicians who can support anything but the most basic introductions to 'Dreamweaver' or 'Flash' and none specialised in 3D modelling of any description.

Whilst there is more technical experience amongst staff, we only touch the surface of experiential media or physical computing at present. We should consider appointing non-designers to these roles e.g. engineers or programmers, to get the best support and reflects the multi-disciplinary reality of modern design practice.

## Recommendations

1. New digitally related workshops, courses or modules
2. Develop our an internationally recognised Communication Design programme
3. Named Masters programmes
4. Develop a rationale for Masters Programmes and their delivery locations
5. Explore MA Bursary scheme
6. To support future ambitions within digital media, technical skills and know-how will need to be developed at both academic and technician levels.





# Learning Communities

## Introduction

The digital revolution has inspired new forms of computer mediated learning from University e-learning repositories and independent subject forums containing tutorials and online resources, to social networking sites connecting both broad and specialist communities of practice. It has even made non-computer mediated learning quicker and cheaper as digital printing has revolutionised academic book publishing by making it cost effective to purchase, print and distribute specialist titles 'on demand'. For the modern design student accessing knowledge and learning new skills has been made much easier, so will students continue to value a traditional design education in the same way?

Whilst there is still a general consensus that studio based system is still the preferred learning environment for design (Simoff & Maher, 2000:119), the educational reality is that few institutions can provide dedicated facilities for every student, nor is it any longer an accurate reflection of modern design practice as many design professionals work in multiple locations (work, home, client office) communicating and collaborating both face to face and at distance.

Managing the value of each form of interaction and experience to inform, discuss, undertake tacit skills and complete tasks is central to efficient and effective use of resources whether in design business or education. Part of this challenge is identifying which learning resources are important, where they reside and from a tutor's point of view who creates or curates them.

## E-learning

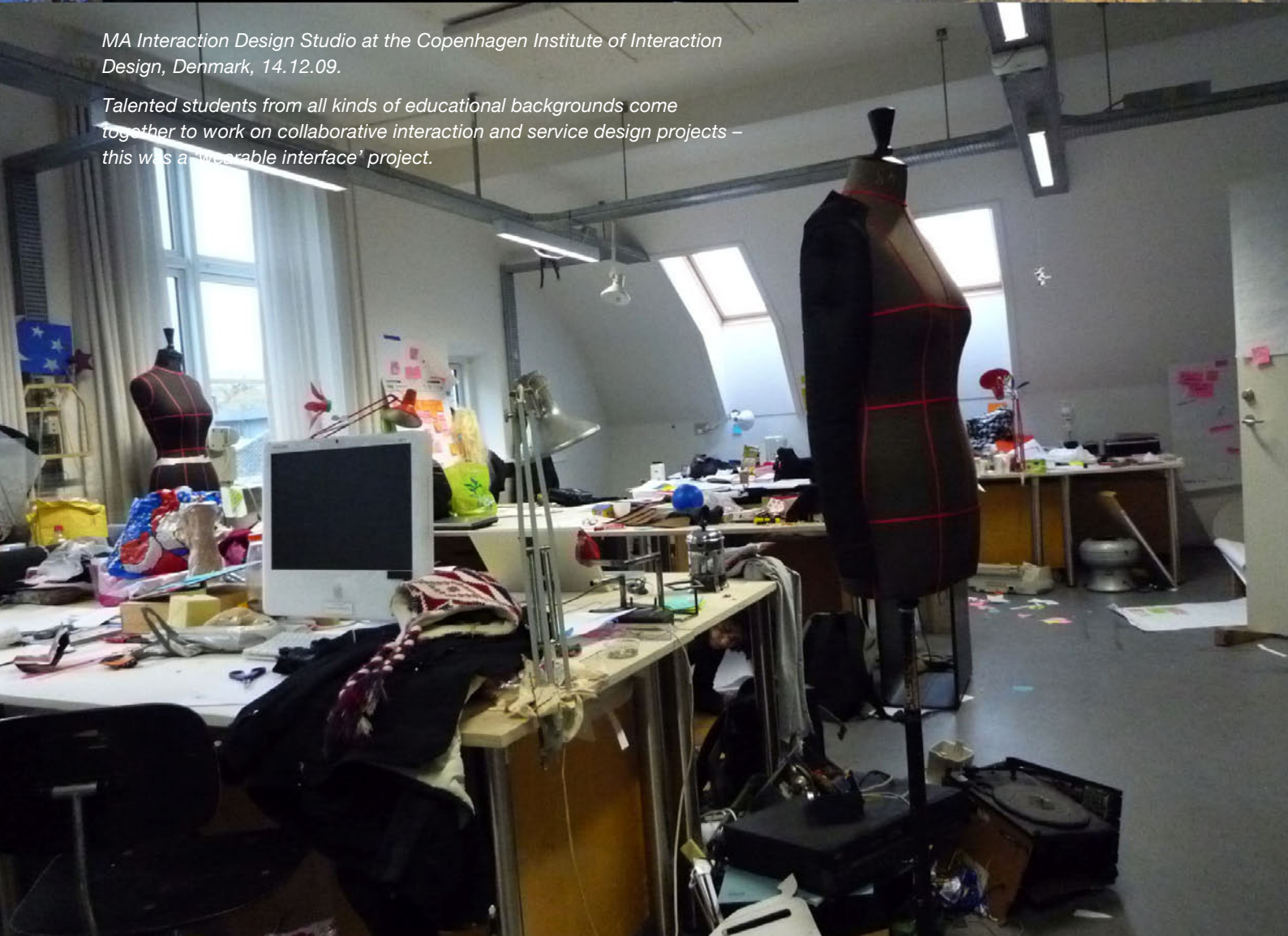
Sir Ron Cooke in his paper 'On-line Innovation in Higher Education' (2008) calls for online material to be made available to all, free of charge at point of use as a valuable resource for all learners and act as a valuable marketing tool for UK education (Cooke, 2008: 14) and points to the success of MIT's *opencourseware* and the Open University's *openlearn* materials which have attracted millions of unique users.

Providing the most relevant design education, in the right environment in with the right resources at the right price will increasingly become a tougher challenge as globalisation and the digital revolution encourage learners with greater mobility or flexibility to scrutinise the value of educational offers. The differing fee structures across the European Union (EU) encourage EU students to look abroad for courses with lower fees or lower student numbers. Or alternatively, turn towards private organisations to receive perceived better experiences that will give them a competitive edge e.g. Hyper Island (Sweden & UK). The challenge of a market-driven and competitive scenario was highlighted by a report to Universities UK (2008) where publicly funded universities would struggle 'to find long-term sustainability elusive as it loses core business to private providers that are able to operate with fewer overheads and are fleetier of foot in recognising key changes in demand' (UK Universities, 2008:42).



*MA Interaction Design Studio at the Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design, Denmark, 14.12.09.*

*Talented students from all kinds of educational backgrounds come together to work on collaborative interaction and service design projects – this was a 'miserable interface' project.*



## Review MA modes of delivery

With the advent of Web 2.0 in 2004 communication and collaboration has been revolutionised giving us the opportunity to review our modes of delivery.

In 2010 what is the difference between a distance learner and a campus based learner? They both have access to online materials and have Facebook and Skype accounts. Moreover wouldn't a professional practitioner have better access to a studio and workshop than one of our campus-based students if s/he wished to undertake a personal project? Furthermore, what is the difference between a MA Management student and an MA Practice student if both choose to comment on reflected and hypothetical practice?

Isn't it time that digital was used to enable students to practice what they want, where they want and how they want as long as it meets with our standards of achievement?

## University networks

As a School we appear to be rather insular in terms of formal design networking and exchange. The Cumulus Association is a select group of leading institutions specialising in Art, Design and Media who work together to promote and share ideas on education through exchange, shared research, joint MA programmes and conferences.

Here is a list of UK competitors who are part of the network:

- Gray's School of Art, The Robert Gordon University
- London College of Communication, University of the Arts London
- Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication
- Royal College of Art
- School of Art & Design, University of Salford
- School of Arts and Creative Industries, Edinburgh Napier University
- Sir John Cass Department of Art, Media and Design, London Metropolitan University
- The Arts University College at Bournemouth
- University College Falmouth, University College Falmouth
- University for the Creative Arts at Epsom, University for the Creative Arts at Canterbury, Epsom, Farnham, Maidstone & Rochester

Membership requires endorsement letters from two present members.

## Exchange and knowledge sharing

As part of the research project, the Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design, Danish School of Design and Media Lab at Aalto University in Helsinki (formally known as TAIK) were visited.

Parties at both institutions were interested in possible student and staff exchanges as well as research opportunities.

MDI was the natural programme of choice for partnering with MA Interaction Design (CIID) and MA New Media (Aalto University). Graphic Design and Interactive Media Design were potential exchanges for Danish School of Design but they have recently chosen to partner with Edinburgh and Glasgow in addition to their long established relationship with London College of Communication (LCC).





Visit University of Art & Design Helsinki (now part of Aalto University), 14-16.12.09.

Top Down: Dr. Teemu Leinonen (Dean of Media Lab) and Professor Philip Dean, MA Interactive Media Exhibition, Film & TV Studio – just part of Aalto's World Class teaching and facilities, they're also founding members of Cumulus.





## Summary

In summary, learning communities are increasingly important not just to learn entry skills but also to form team-working skills throughout learners' careers. In the same way the School of Design too needs to build partnerships for the creation and sharing of knowledge and resources to maximise use of funding and create better experiences for their learners.

## Recommendations

### 1. Open Access Online Materials

Consider creating a digital resource library for all students to support learning and act as a marketing tool for future students.

### 2. Join the Cumulus Network

Join and become part of a formal knowledge-sharing network than also works together to leverage substantial research funding bids.

### 3. Review MA modes of delivery

With the advent of Web 2.0 in 2004 communication and collaboration has been revolutionised giving us the opportunity to review our modes of delivery.

*Connecting Minds...*

*Cumulus has been a pioneer in developing jointly organised MA-programmes, intensive workshops, projects and biannual conferences.*

*Image taken at the Museum of Modern Art, Helsinki, 16.12.09.*





# Research

## Introduction

We are entering an important phase in design's response to all things digital, a phase of changing communication inspired by the technical aspirations of Web 2.0 and its exemplars e.g. Facebook and Twitter. Unlike previous phases, which could be characterised by new ways of crafting e.g. desktop publishing and new opportunities for creation e.g. web design, the communication phase fundamentally challenges designers to question the very principles behind how we communicate, what audiences value and what designers offer.

For design research this is an extremely rich time as established design disciplines have to re-examine their working practices and services, and new fields of design expertise are being created. Understanding the advances in digital technology will not alone explain the changes and potential research opportunities in design as this report has also highlighted the interconnected importance of globalisation and the new economic models.

During the research project, visits were made to other Universities both home and abroad to discover how they were responding to the Digital Age. London College of Communication were operating active research groups that were made up of pure researchers, academics and technicians and effectively used MA programmes as labs. Aalto University in Helsinki have also built their research profile on the back of their MA programmes, moving from no research only 15 years ago to a point where they currently have 216 doctoral students out of a student population of 1,968 with 161 professors and teachers.

This section will now highlight some of the key influences on design opportunities in the digital age and new opportunities for design research before making recommendations.

## Key Influences

### Cultural Convergence

Convergence has several different interpretations depending on professional perspective: for a software developer it may be the creation of a multi-functional device, for a journalist the integration of online and offline news and for a sociologist the mixing of cultural views in an web forum. All forms of convergence have occurred during the digital age but latterly it could be argued that cultural convergence is the most significant.

Convergence does not occur through media appliances, however sophisticated they become. Convergence occurs within the brains of individual consumers and through their social interactions with others.

Jenkins, 2006:2

Jenkins' expression of cultural convergence summarises the change in communication and notions of product that designers now have to contend with. Audiences are not just communicating and consuming media in different ways, they are also creating and sharing their own media. These new 'prosumers' (producer-



*LBi, London, E1, 09.10.09.*

*LBi is a marketing and technology agency blending insight and creativity to solve business problems. Their work for third sector clients e.g. Red Cross demonstrates their skills at working with convergent cultures and media.*

*Interview with Matt Watts, Creative Director.*



consumers) may challenge the old media model but they are also providing a new business models.

### New Business Models

A plethora of new business models and phenomena have emerged in the digital age. Some are a direct consequence of digital revolution, others less so, as globalisation has also played a major role in general economic change.

'Folksonomy' or 'Wikinomics' refer to the increasing trend in communal publishing (Tapscott, 2007). Web services like YouTube allow users to self-publish valuable content for broad or narrowcast audiences at relatively little cost. In return, web services can attract lucrative advertising revenues from effectively free labour.

In contrast, 'Long Tail Economics' refers to a new phenomenon of selling a small number of niche products to a large audience over a longer time frame:

Our culture and economy are increasingly shifting away from a focus on a relatively small number of hits (mainstream products and markets) at the head of the demand curve, and moving towards a huge number of niches in the tail.

Anderson, 2006:52

Cheaper media production tools, rapid prototyping and replication have made it possible for unsigned bands, independent filmmakers and designer-makers to create quality products and then market and distribute them cheaply over the internet to niche audiences.

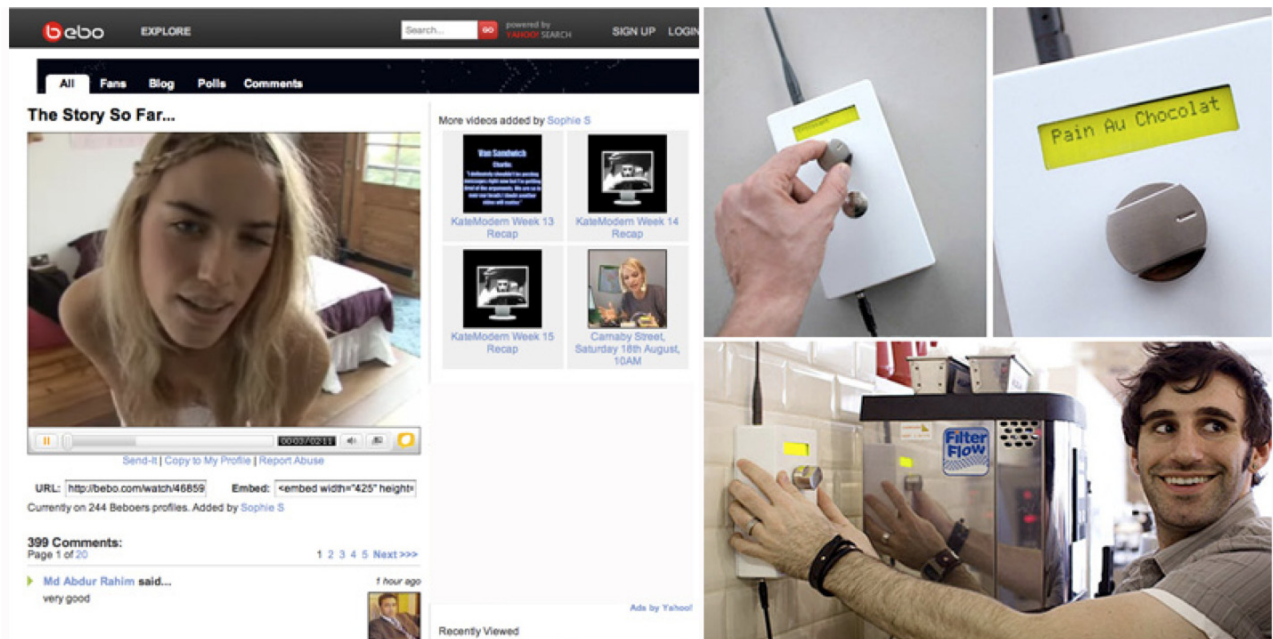
### Knowledge Economy

'Wikinomics' and 'The Long Tail' provide new business models for designers and entrepreneurs, but they are relatively small phenomena in a far larger 'knowledge economy'. The knowledge or 'new' economy refers to a 'faster, better, cheaper' business mantra based on the combined effects of a growing service sector, globalisation and a greater uptake in information technology making businesses less susceptible to fluctuations in the marketplace.

For design, a growing service sector has provided new client opportunities, and globalisation and information technology have given designers the ability to work with clients, partners and suppliers worldwide. The disadvantage has been increased competition, as many agencies pass financial savings made from technology directly to their clients (Julier & Moor, 2009:7).

For design education, the creative industries appear at the forefront of government planning and view design as a key ingredient in making creative capital to feed our service sector (Leitch, 2004, Cox, 2005). The downside for education has been the relative lack of funding. Universities' response has typically been to increase student numbers at the expense of taught time and studio space, whilst looking towards more student-centred learning experiences and greater use e-learning resources to redress the balance (Baines, 2005).





*Illustration 6: Bebo's online soap 'Kate Modern' and Poke's 'Bakertweet' are two products made viable through Long Tail...*

## Summary

The digital age is not just providing alternative media channels for designers and educators to work within, it's fundamentally changing how we do business, work, communicate and entertain ourselves. Convergence of culture, media and technology is changing for whom and what we design. New economic models are creating new business opportunities that were previously unviable. For design research, understanding new economic models and phenomena would provide an invaluable insight into future design opportunities.

## Opportunities for Design

Whilst it is becoming somewhat of a platitude to describe the dissolving boundaries between the design disciplines, we should not underestimate the level of real economic, social and technological change that lies behind the rhetoric.

Mccullagh, 2000:49

Whilst boundaries may have dissolved, new disciplines and job titles have also emerged to help us understand more relevant hybrid skill sets and value important new specialisms born out of new business opportunities and trends.

Some boundaries have dissolved both horizontally and vertically. We have witnessed more design agencies become involved with advertising through brand development, designed new public services, and developed new products for risk share equity. This movement upwards is both an acceptance of design's greater strategic importance, and as an alternative revenue stream. Some of the most important new opportunities and challenges will now be discussed.

## Branding

Branding is like a political movement,  
not a military operation.

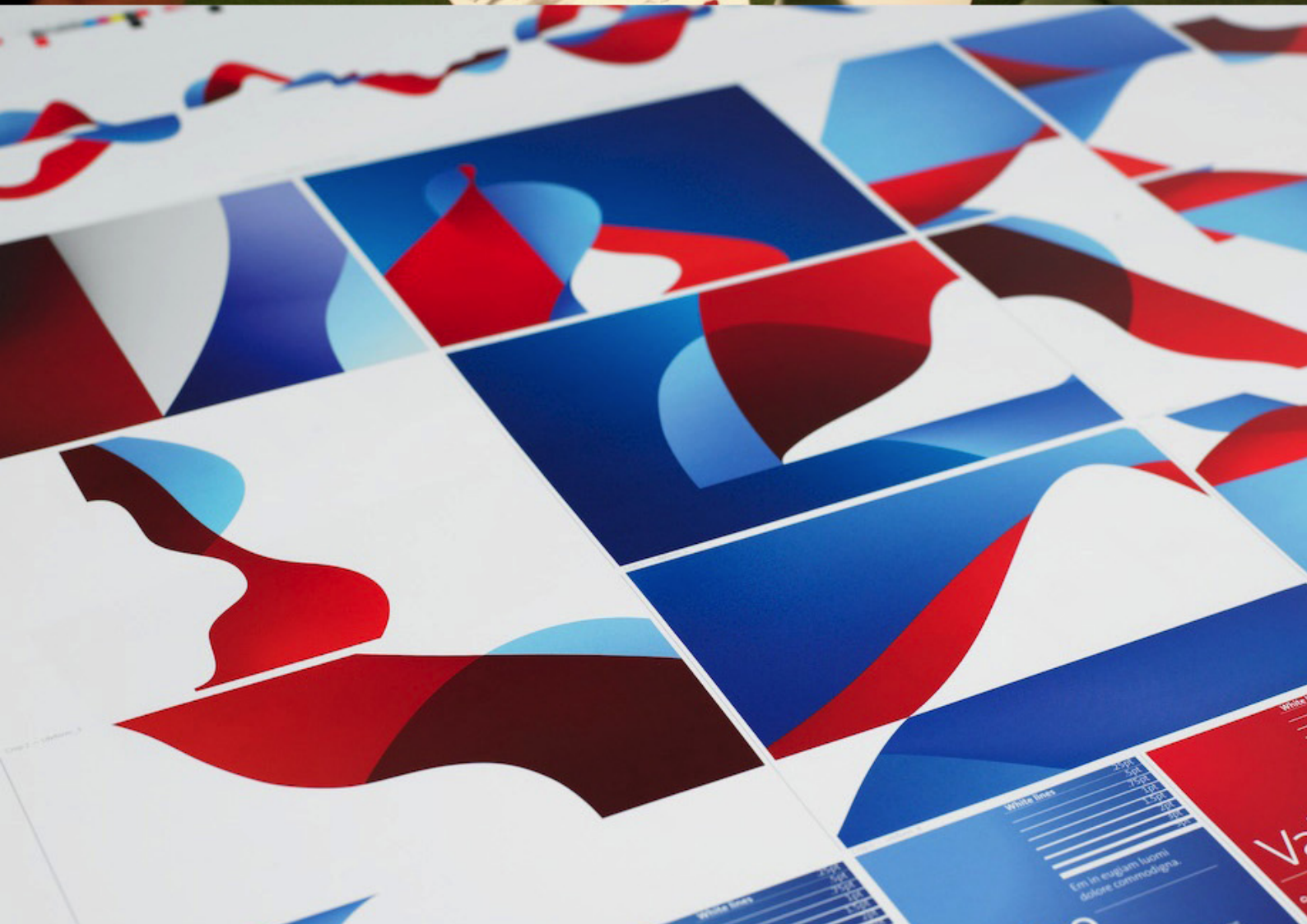
Bill Sermon, Nokia.

The growth of online communications and multi-channel delivery has given more businesses the opportunity to market and supply their products and services globally. This extended reach has placed greater importance on the role of brand to create meaningful dialogues with global audiences in new dynamic and flexible ways.

To achieve this, designers are transforming inflexible identity systems carrying staid corporate messages, into evolving brands with stories to tell, using a variety of new sensory signatures including movement, voices and gestures.

*Next page: Illustration 7, Moving Brands co-creation with Swisscom on their 'living brand'.*





## Communication – Mobile Media, HCI and Content Creation

To connect brands with their audiences, agencies are increasingly looking towards mobile as the platform to create an ongoing dialogue. Mobile is set to become the dominant digital platform for communication according to digital media strategists (Rosen, 2009). Assessments are based on facts, figures and future phone specifications: e.g. 2.7 billion computers versus 4.1 billion mobile phone contracts worldwide, most of which are kept within arms reach twenty-four hours per day, and globally mobile phone penetration is set to pass 45% worldwide in 2010 (Frost & Sullivan, 2009)

How will this affect design? On a practical level, designing for smaller interfaces will become increasingly important as clients want to format their online content for this medium. On a theoretical level, understanding social media and how to create bespoke content to keep audiences interested in their products.

## Communication – Events & Experiences

In contrast to these onscreen interactions, there is significant growth in experiential and event driven communication. Experiential design is used to describe more physical interaction such as interactive museum installations that perhaps rely on input devices external to the computer e.g. pressure pads or cameras attached to micro-controllers. Exhibitions such as *Decode* curated by Onedotzero at the V&A illustrate this.

Some experiences do not require a computer at all such as Nike's *Run London* event which create brand loyalty through active participation, however some of the more interesting and involved experiences such as Nike's *Bootcamp* use computer mediated delivery to create totally immersive experiences.

Events and Experiences are becoming an increasingly important feature of design communication between client and consumer as 'conversations' become the preferred form of dialogue.

## The Integration of Service Design

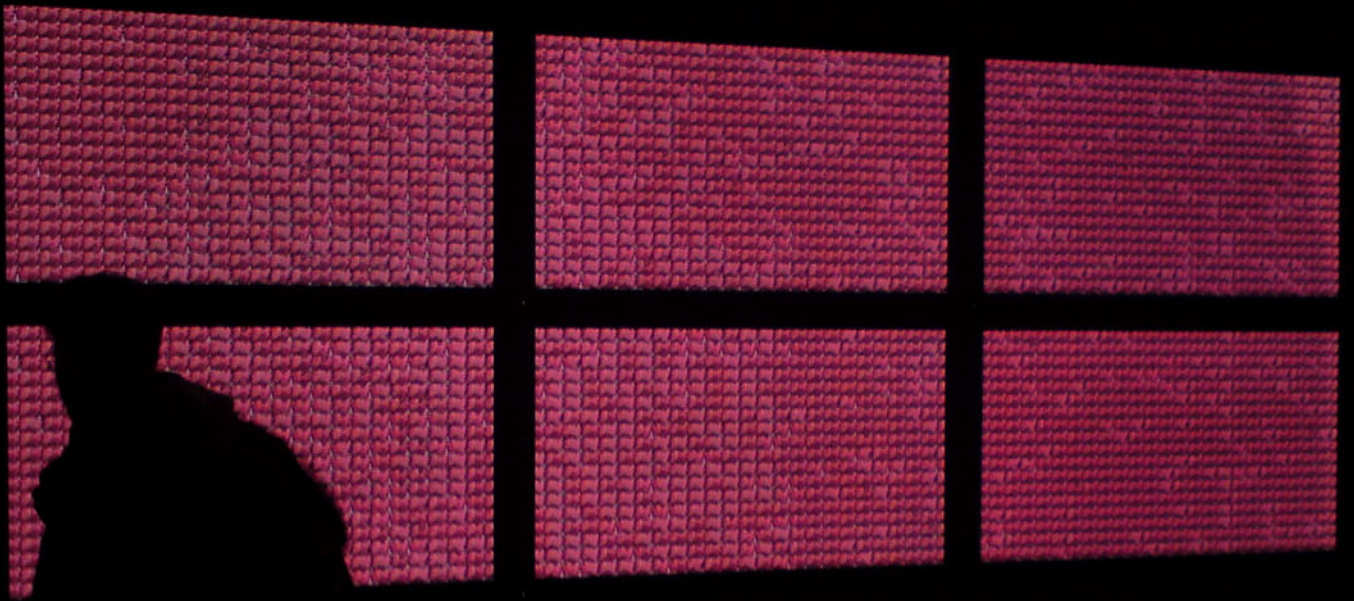
From a design point of view, I think we're moving much more into a world of Service Design; I think we're moving into a world of experiences rather than individual things. So that kind of agency model where Graphic Designers produce a lovely piece of print collateral but aren't thinking about what the rest of the brand is doing – I think those days are numbered.

Jon Hewitt | Senior Design, Moving Brands, London

The term Service Design has occurred in many of the interviews undertaken for this study, identified as a new opportunity for the creative industries. Its definition may be a little ambiguous or perhaps more accurately the use of the term maybe less widespread outside academia, but what has been acknowledged during interviews is that the field is of growing importance.

From interviews, whether Service Design remains a discrete offer from specialist agencies is moot, since it appears to be flourishing particularly well within larger multi-disciplinary agencies where it has been seen as an extended offer on top of the product, digital or communication design already being commissioned. William Lidstone, Client Partner at AKQA and Alistair Sim, Director at The Chase, see Service Design as the natural extension of brand.





*Decode at the V&A curated by Onedotzero, 11.02.10.*

*An 'event' with lots of interactive experiences...*





## Design Automation

Not all design opportunities will benefit both client and designer. Some forms of innovation such as digital printing and online template driven design will significantly change what designers' offer and how they are valued.

Technology and globalisation have made some design disciplines easier to assimilate, leading to financial devaluation. Graphic Design is one such discipline where salaries fell to £24,514 in 2009, over a thousand pounds less than the national average (Montgomery, 2009).

Research into Design Automation may also prove a very interesting research theme as it asks key questions about the nature of design and the role of a designer.

## Business Enterprise

As understanding of Intellectual Property grows amongst traditional fee for services design firms and alternative remuneration model success stories begin to emerge, we expect more design firms to explore alternative remuneration models.

British Design Innovation, 2008

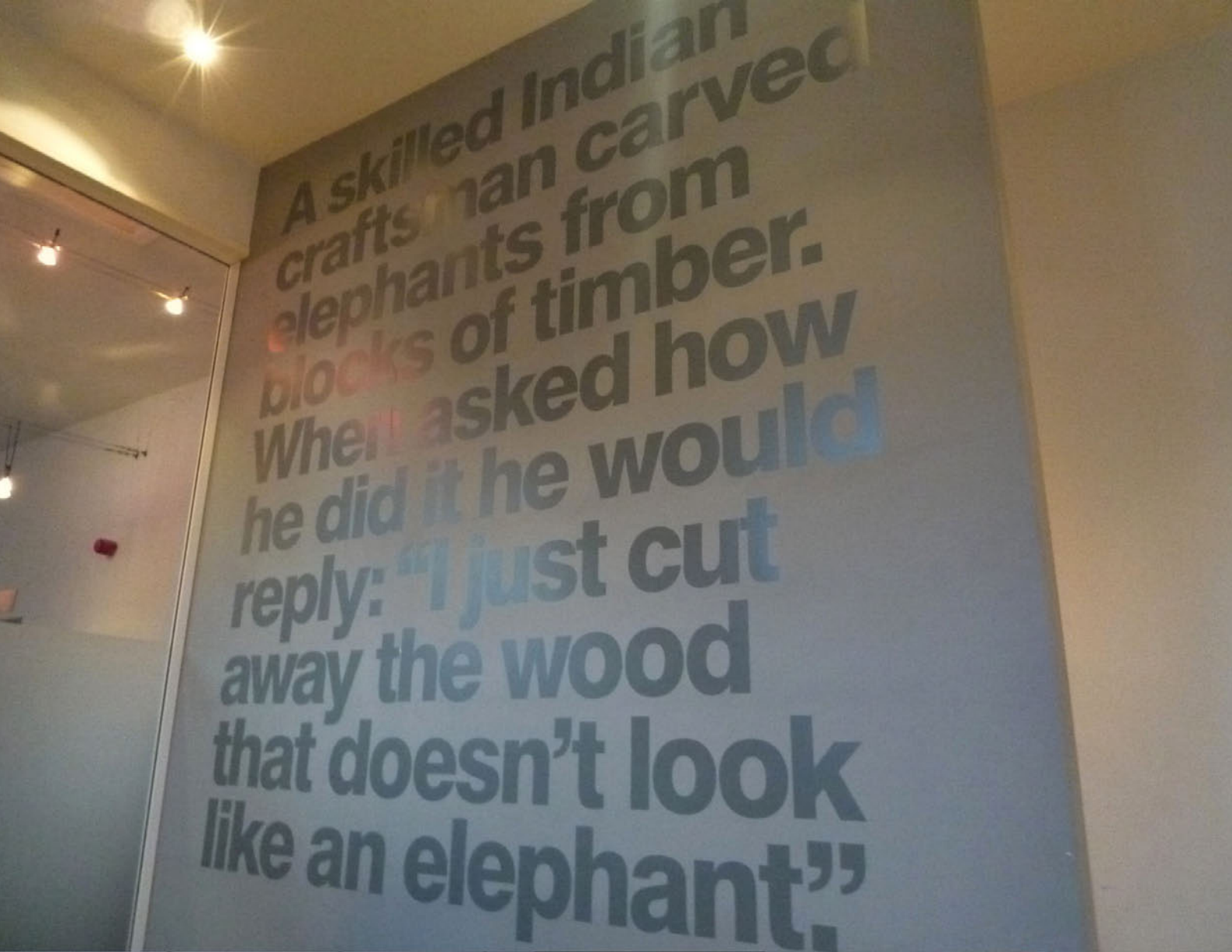
The design of new services whether for private or public requires business insight, innovation and commercialisation. As design agencies get more involved in designing the services on which businesses models are formed, designers are beginning to realise their true value. Enterprise is becoming an increasingly important aspect of the modern design agency as income from fee-based craft-related design decreases.

In my previous role, we actually created an Intellectual Property Division within an agency... because we understood that owning our own IP and then either licensing it or doing an equity share or profit share would be far more preferable than working for clients.

Alistair Sim | Director, The Chase, Manchester

Whilst IPR, royalties, licensing and risk share equity may be more familiar remunerations models for fashion and product, these payment models are largely alien to the field of visual communication until recently e.g. Anomaly, What If and Zag Invention.

For design research, understanding how these models can practically harnessed and effectively implemented would create real value for consultancy and contract research opportunities.



*Interview with Alistair Sim, Director at The Chase, Manchester, 30.11.09.*



## Summary

Designing in the digital age has witnessed changes to existing disciplines, the growth of strategy and more new specialist disciplines. These changes require new knowledge and skills that will centre on more business, social science and technical expertise, reflecting the growing sophistication of design and what it offers.

Whilst some may argue that these skills are best left to experts, the truth is that as more design skills and processes become automated or cost sensitised by increased competition, designers need to add strategy and advanced technical skills to their armoury to maintain status, currency and value.

### A Research Model

Design research to support the analysis of the practical and communicate the theoretical will be of important value in these identified areas. Since most of these potential research areas or opportunities will be new to many staff, one attractive research approach may be to form research groups to participate in a practical design projects in order to understand these new opportunities at first hand e.g. the design of a Smartphone app or the staging of an event/experience.

These real world experiences would encourage staff who are unfamiliar with models of classic research to use their own practical expertise to participate and view others with more active research or enterprise expertise close-up.

### An Enterprise Model

Undertaking research through a practical project may lead to genuine enterprise or intellectual property opportunities, and serves to underline the real commercial value of new knowledge that many leading research institutions manage to create.

This in turn raises a new question: Could we use the Digital Age as an opportunity to focus some of our research activities in an entrepreneurial direction?

Moreover, if we are producing more research as a result of more focused Masters programmes and more active research from staff will we need to create a model for enterprise within the School or should we leave it to the wider University to facilitate?

## Recommendations

1. Explore new research themes or groups
  - a. Digital Brands
  - b. Design Enterprise
  - c. Designing for Devices
  - d. Experiential Design
2. Investigate introducing a new Research Model to encourage collaborative and co-operative Design Research practice



Beautifully designed PhD theses on sale at  
the University of Art & Design, Helsinki, 14.12.09.





# Business Development

## Introduction

The previous sections of this report have already discussed how digital revolution and globalisation have created many new opportunities for design and design education, new business development would require us to maximise the potential of our present offer and moving into new territories where we have little or no experience e.g. short professional courses.

The research project reviewed some of the new developments that our competitors in the UK and abroad offer with varying degrees of similarity and difference. Whilst it is easy to identify differences it is less clear without inside knowledge how successful they are in terms of delivering institutional objectives. From interviews with lead academics from other institutions the consensus was that no one has got the perfect solution particularly where Continuing Profession Development (CPD) is concerned.

In brief many of our competitors offer short professional courses part funded through Skillset e.g. CSM and Falmouth, others are offering workshops and programmes through third party suppliers e.g. Ravensbourne. The RCA appears to be one of the few design led institutions able to successfully offer 'thought leadership' workshops and consultancy through 'Innovation RCA'.

Of the private organisations, D&AD appears to be offering professional creatives a popular diet of workshops but this has taken over seven years to establish according to Laura Woodroffe, Director of Education & Professional Development. The Design Council is trying to establish their online Designers' Business Knowledge Base in partnership with UK Institutions to deliver CPD.

The following section will highlight some of the potential business opportunities, examples and implications. They will be divided for the most part into short term (1-2 years) and medium terms (3-4 years) opportunities as long term (5 years +) is extremely hard to speculate on where technology is concerned.

## Opportunity Objectives

### Short Term (1-2 years)

- New Communication Design related Masters programmes
- A Communication Design Annual Conference
- CPD workshops through partners

### Medium Term (3-4 years)

- CPD For In-House Design Teams
- Design Skills Academy
- Design Management & Strategy Workshops & Short Courses
- 'White Label' Or Partner Programmes

### Long Term (5 years +)

- Design Institute (with integrated Incubation Unit)

*Interviewees opposite all contributed to the debate on CPD and other new business opportunities. Right to Left and Top to Bottom: Carrie Cuncliffe | Codeworks, David Crow | MMU, Alistair Sim | The Chase, Lesley Morris | Design Council, Lawrence Zeegen | Kingston University, Shane Walter | Onedotzero, Laura Woodroffe | D&AD, Jon Hewitt | Moving Brands.*



## Opportunities Explained

### New Communication Design MAs

The Learning & Teaching section identified that there is little opportunity for undergraduate development in Newcastle, and in London there are issues with providing a competitive undergraduate 'experience'. However, we can make much more of our postgraduate offer where there are clearer opportunities.

### Communication Design Conference

Due to lack of sponsorship and no owned venue D&AD have had to curtail their popular Xchange conference for design lecturers. The event aims to share the latest professional ideas and project work with academics before they commence teaching in any new academic year.

We don't have the same level of overheads as D&AD and have been able to attract an international cast of leading professionals so we should explore the viability of putting on a similar conference. September is a popular time for this kind of event. We could also explore creating a crossover for design research and pedagogy i.e. It could also be contributed to by academics.

### CPD Workshops Through Partners

Work with partner organisations to provide CPD programmes at the School of Design.

There are currently lots CPD lectures, workshops and courses offered by public and private organisations so moving into this difficult and at times crowded marketplace maybe easier and simpler if we work off the back of more established organisation where we can offer the School as a venue or brand, dependent on the partner's credentials.

- Design Network North (DNN) and Codeworks Connect in the region currently offer one off lectures, workshops and conferences for the design and digital sectors, so working with them to host events may work to our long advantage in establishing ourselves as a known CPD provider.
- From talking to Lesley Morris at the Design Council, CPD development will take place through the combined efforts of the UK Design Skills Alliance (Design Council, D&AD, Design Business Association (DBA) and DNN amongst others). This group will offer CPD advice online through Designers' Business Knowledge Base and offline through workshops. How this will take shape and gets rolled out we need to explore with the Design Council and DNN, particularly in the light of the General Election and anticipated budget cuts.
- Research the best independent CPD providers and offer their services through the School. This would be a similar model to Ravensbourne who use independent providers to deliver many of their Skillset courses.

### CPD Programmes For In-House Design Teams

There are an estimated 232,000 designers in the UK:  
65,900 are freelancers, 82,500 work in design  
consultancies, and 83,600 work in in-house design teams.

Design Council, 2010:2

There are now more designers working for in-house design teams than in consultancies according to the Design Industry Insights Report 2010 (Design Council, 2010:2) and their number has grown 10% since 2005.





*In the UK, there are around 6,500 in-house design teams working in non-design businesses of over 100 employees: a good opportunity for CPD.*



One of the reasons why in-house design has grown is the perceived value of design as a business tool. Managers are seeing in-house designers drive up design value in their products and services, but who and what drives the values of these in-house teams?

In-house designers need to develop valuable skills in communication, managing projects and potentially thought leadership, and arguably have the budget and resources to pay for it. 85% of design consultancies earn less than £500,000/year, yet 1 in 5 in-house teams have a budget in excess of £1,000,000/year (Design Council, 2010:11).

### Design Skills Academy

Many of our regional and national competitors e.g. Teesside, Falmouth and Ravensbourne have applied for and set up Skillset Regional Media Academies to resource, maintain and keep update their facilities and staff. These 22 academies were set up to provide professional training and expertise for the broadcast and interactive media industries where people with the latest skills are in short supply.

The Skillset aims fall inline with many of the School's aspirations:

Skillset is working with universities and colleges to collaborate seamlessly with industry partners to develop new curricula, innovative teaching, world-class research and development, and enhanced business acumen.

Funds are available for training institutions and trainees so there is a potential income stream from this kind of activity as well as the benefits of creating longer-term relationships with learners and keeping staff up-to-date, however, it would require investment in both facility and staff to run this kind of initiative.

### Design Management & Strategy Workshops & Short Courses

Workshops and short courses in Design Management & Strategy are the natural CPD offer from our teaching and research activity as the School is renown for its industry-focused 'Blue Sky' thinking rather than just concentrating on graduates with great craft skills.

Strategic thinking and related management topics develop slower than practical tacit digital skills so give us more time to research and develop. They also have higher potential monetary value due to their strategic nature. If we were offering the courses or workshops now, Digital Branding, Managing Convergent & Digital Media Projects and Experience Prototyping would be a few the titles we could offer. In the medium term, the market will have moved on but it will give us time to develop the expertise required to staff and run them.

### 'White Label' Or Partner Programmes

There is evidence that leading creative agencies are starting up their own educational programmes in order to educate their own workforce or as a commercial opportunity in its own right. Partnering with top agencies to help provide or validate theses offers could be the way forward for undergraduate or most likely postgraduate modern apprenticeships. We could provide either without our name (hence 'White Label') or more preferably in partnership with the agency partner.

As an example, Wieden & Kennedy, the multi-award winning creatively driven advertising agency offer a dozen places each year at their Portland Office. WK receive hundreds of applicants for a year's unpaid internship worth 'thousands' according to the press releases with the potential of getting a job at the end of it.





*Home and Away, Think in Newcastle and AKQA in London could be two agencies capable of running partner programmes*





## Design Institute (with integrated Incubation Unit)

Making long-term strategies is notoriously difficult especially when trying to factor in the potential evolution of digital media. In recent government papers for UK Universities, the reports are reluctant to speculate further than five years where e-learning or digital are concerned. However, if it's the School's direction of travel is to become a world-leading Institute in Design which includes a 'Graduate School' and a Centre for Design Research then it really needs to develop it's Business Incubation Function to support fledgling businesses.

At present, one of many start-ups from Multimedia Design have gone through the University's 'Hatchery' system e.g. Orange Panda but other successful start ups have taken their own route e.g. *Preemptive*, *Fusebox*, *Nation* and *Plump Digital* for a variety of reasons. Offering a more compelling opportunity to stay within our network would add strength to our core offer and business opportunities.

## Recommendations

1. New Communication Design Related Masters Programmes
2. A Communication Design Annual Conference
3. CPD Workshops Through Partners
4. CPD Programme For In-House Design Teams
5. Design Skills Academy
6. Design Management & Strategy Workshops & Short Courses
7. 'White Label' Or Partner Programmes



## Conclusion

Today's education must challenge young designers to discover, understand and develop the language of a new medium: interactivity.

New technologies demand that we think of what to design, but also how to design it well; designing the right thing is as important as designing it right. Herein lies the second challenge for young designers: What is the right thing to design?

Crampton-Smith, 2004:206

This quotation neatly summarises the problem for design and design education in the digital age. We have a new language of interaction in its broadest sense, which challenges an older established language. In parts taking over it completely and in others simply added new vocabulary. Our personal language preference is still a matter of choice, but with whom and how we communicate is new.

New business models, and new agendas guided through public policy, are creating new design problems and issues for designers, design education and design research to solve. The design industry is adapting to the digital age's opportunities and challenges, some businesses are here as a direct result of new technology, other longer established design agencies are using it to enhance their offer.

For design education and research, we are in a time of considerable opportunity and flux. We've witnessed technology add breadth to our courses, teaching delivery methods, research initiatives and consultancy, but like other design businesses, the global recession will make our stakeholders reassess their plans. Interactivity has led to a new language of communication, challenging us to adopt new craft skills and make implicit new contexts.

The reports key findings and recommendations are now listed below:

### Key Findings

1. The 'digital revolution' is somewhat inseparable concept from 'globalisation' and the 'new economy' so when analysing new design opportunities as a result of new technology, there are often important global and economic ramifications.
2. Craft skills are digital too. Many new design skills are continually being developed on the dissolving borders of other disciplines e.g. computing, demanding that we re-evaluate our notions of germane design skills.
3. 'Digital context' is challenging our conventions of design practice and processes.
4. 'Design strategy' has become a necessity for design agencies hoping to deliver highly valued products and services to their clients.
5. The 'digital age' is questioning design consultancy business models as traditional fee revenue diminishes in favour of equity-based models.
6. The digital age is demanding designers (and design educators) with hybrid skills sets, who work well in multi-disciplinary teams to deliver projects that are growing in complexity.



7. Universities need to embrace e-learning and digitally enabled delivery to support face-to-face learning and promote their value in an increasingly global and competitive educational market place.
8. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is an informal and ad hoc arrangement for most designers and is currently supplied by professional bodies and independent providers rather than academic institutions.

## Recommendations

1. There is little room for new undergraduate programmes so we need to **re-develop the current curricula** where necessary to acknowledge new digital crafts and contexts.
2. Consider an **integrated module framework** at undergraduate to deal with flux in student numbers and support pathways in programmes e.g. an Interaction pathway for BA (Hons) Design For Industry.
3. Develop an internationally recognised **Communication Design** programme at postgraduate level or explore redeveloping the current undergraduate Graphic Design programme to accommodate this important growth area.
4. **Connect experiences** through clearly sign-posted vertical and horizontal pathways between undergraduate and postgraduate programmes for students and staff.
5. **Named Masters** that reflect the greater complexity of design in the digital age e.g. MA Interaction & Service Design or MA Branding & Strategy.
6. **Review MA modes and locations of delivery** (in the light of new technologies) to encourage more learners to participate in more flexible ways.
7. Explore an **MA Bursary** scheme subsidised through lower undergraduate bursaries.
8. Build **open access online courses/programmes** for all to help current students and attract future students.
9. **Join the 'Cumulus' University Network** to become part of a formal knowledge-sharing network: sharing of ideas, research, staff and students.
10. Explore **new research themes or groups** such as Digital Brands, Design Enterprise, Designing for Devices, and Experiential Design.
11. To support future ambitions within digital media, **technical skills and know-how** will need developing at both **academic and technician levels**.
12. Investigate introducing a **New Research Model** to encourage collaborative and co-operative design research practice.
13. Develop an Annual **Communication Design Conference**.
14. To develop **CPD Workshops** quickly, we need to work with strategic partners or endorse 'suppliers'.
15. Consider building a **Design Skills Academy** specialising in Interactive Media supported by Skillset.
16. **Target in-house design teams** and design managers for CPD.
17. Create **'White label'** or partner programmes for design agency partners.

The findings and recommendations give a broad understanding of the present context and what we should consider when moving the School forward where digital is concerned. It should be noted that findings and recommendations into specific digital technologies or skills for teaching, learning or research have been avoided due to the speed of change, once general conceptual directions have been decided on, the detailed analysis and business cases can follow.

In framing an idea we may assume what we wish,  
but should avoid impossibilities.

Aristotle

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