

Spark: UAL Creative Teaching and Learning Journal

Preface

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When Catherine Smith, the editor of *Spark*, and I first spoke about a special issue devoted to archives, special collections and libraries we agreed that we wanted to focus on the pedagogic enquiry and project work arising from these collections. We wanted to capture examples of innovative teaching and learning and the differing ways librarians, archivists and curators are engaging with debates and dialogues about key issues of theory and practice in creative arts teaching and learning. In doing this we wanted to illustrate the contribution the University's collections and the staff who work with these collections make to the delivery of our institutional strategic priorities as well as to the advancement of practice and scholarship within creative arts education.

The overarching impression that comes through when reading this special issue of *Spark* is of the extensive range of activities that increasingly embed the University's archives, special collections and libraries within teaching and learning. They demonstrate the innovative approaches librarians, archivists and curators adopt in their work to enable students to realise their full potential, including through enquiry-based and object-based learning (UAL Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Strategy 2015). These practices are also aligned with our core values of being student-centred, accessible and inclusive and of encouraging curiosity and supporting risk-taking to enable creativity and resilience (UAL Library and Student Support Strategy 2018).

Many of the articles highlight the role of librarians, archivists and curators as critically engaged creative practitioners and as activists for social change. They illustrate how archives, museums and libraries are by no means neutral spaces, but instead they are sites for both the production and reproduction of knowledge, which in itself is highly selective. The collections act as catalysts for criticism and debate that lead to the creation of new practices and new histories. In these ways they provide a powerful opportunity for us to enact our commitment to social justice and diversity at the core of creativity (UAL Academic Strategy 2018).

The constructive blurring of professional and academic territories and the enriching power of collaboration is also evident in this issue as many of the articles refer to co-creation and co-delivery with academic colleagues and with students. Through this partnership approach both within and outside of the curriculum and within and across disciplines, the roles of teacher-curator-librarian-archivist-practitioner are intertwined in the institutional mission to deliver transformative education.

The production of this journal was in itself a highly collaborative and creative process, and the editorial was conceived as a collective interpretation through conversation. I would like to thank all the contributors to this special issue, the editorial board and peer reviewers. In particular, I would like to thank Catherine Smith for giving us the opportunity to produce this special issue on the University's archives, special collections and libraries.

My hope is that the articles within this journal will prompt further curiosity in our collections and inspire new teaching and learning initiatives that will contribute to the development and delivery of an education that is responsive, responsible, imaginative and inspirational (UAL Strategy 2015), and which enhances the student experience of UAL.

References

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