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Creating Cultures of Innovation: The Digital Creative Industries

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Executive Summary

In seeking models for knowledge exchange (KE) from arts and humanities research to digital creative industries (DCI) of the creative economy, we came to consider emerging approaches being applied to other areas of the economy. One approach we discovered that could also be highly effective for the DCI is the Creating Cultures of Innovation (CCoI) action research programme of the Glasgow School of Art's (GSA's) Institute of Design Innovation. It similarly aims to transfer techniques and approaches from design research to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). So, we consider the potential of the CCoI action research programme for the DCI. It has thus far been utilised in a range of SMEs, such as a brewery and shoemakers, but as of yet has not been applied to SMEs in the DCI. Therefore, we considered the nature of the DCI with regards to CCoI activities. We conclude by considering the potential of the programme as a model for wider arts and humanities research, beyond design research, for KE to the DCI.

1 Introduction

The CCoI action research programme is being delivered by the GSA, in partnership with the Institute of Directors and the University of Glasgow Business School, to explore the role that higher education might play in improving skills utilisation in the workplace. The premise of the initiative is to explore the use of design thinking in improving performance, innovation and economic productivity in participating SMEs. The project involves working with leaders to harness creativity within their organisation and enable workplace innovation through collaboration. It is being delivered through a series of integrated workshops for cross-functional teams at each participating company. These pilots were run over a period of two years, with interim tasks for the team to take back and apply in the workplace, ensuring a *ripple effect* across the organisation. [Briscoe 2014]

The DCI represented 15.6% of the employment, and 43.3% of the £71.4 million Gross Value Added, of the creative economy for the UK in 2012 [DCMS 2014]. The introduction of the new occupational classification has enabled better identification of information technology (IT) occupations which are creative (e.g. web design and programmers) from those which are not [SOC 2010]. Adoption of the *creative intensity* approach provides a rationale for the inclusion of a number of software and IT industries since their *digital creative* parts can now be better identified, and which are vital to the Creative Industries [DCMS 2013].

The next section will introduce the approach of the CCoI programme, with the subsequent section introducing the DCI to propose adaptations. We will then consider the potential of the model of the programme for wider arts and humanities research in the final section.

2 Creating Cultures of Innovation

CCoI is exploring the use of design thinking in improving the effective use of skills in the workforce of participating companies to enhance performance, innovation and economic productivity [Briscoe

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2014]. The programme is delivered as a series of bespoke, integrated workshops for a cross functional team from the company encompassing a *diagonal slice* of the workforce [Lockwood 2012]. The basic framework incorporates the *double diamond*¹ design process as shown in Figure 1, and a series of tools and modules to populate this framework. The focus of the intervention is to address a specific area identified collaboratively with the company at the outset (i.e. the workshops are tailored specifically to meet the objectives of each company). It has thus far been utilised in a range of SMEs, from a brewery to a shoemakers, and is now progressing into a second round. However, it has not as of yet has not been applied to SMEs in the DCI.

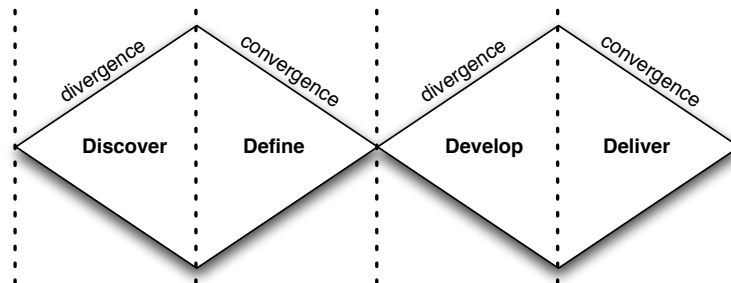


Figure 1: The double diamond was developed by the Design Council as a way of describing the design process. Divided into four distinct phases, Discover, Define, Develop and Deliver, mapping the divergent and convergent stages of the design process. [DC 2005]

The current approach consists of a series of workshops, with the last intended to deliver a working result and potentially customers. It is delivered over three phases [Lockwood 2012, Briscoe 2014]. The first phase of *scoping* involves identifying suitable companies, through the delivery of *taster sessions* and discussions with the company leader. The overall aim of the intended intervention would then be agreed. The second phase of *design and delivery* consists of workshops designed specifically for the company, addressing an area they wish to focus upon. A suite of design tools, developed by the GSA, are used within these workshops. These workshops involve the company participants being taught design thinking techniques, testing their use in a safe environment, and then applying them to the work challenge set for the team. The third and final phase of *evaluation*, after the workshops have been completed, includes a *stickiness audit*. It evaluates to what extent skills and knowledge, and the different approach developed, have been embedded and adopted as a new way of working within the company.

Throughout the programme the design team provide a mentoring role, being available to help overcome difficulties encountered. In addition, team members can visit the studios at GSA to help gain ideas and insight into design processes. Also, for the company leaders update meetings are scheduled, to talk about progress for the company, the team and individuals. Given the importance of culture at organisations, requires participants to actively *ripple* out the skills and work practices developed at the workshops to colleagues across the company. This *ripple* effect is then expected to cascade skills and learning from the workshops across the organisation, engaging employees and overcoming internal inhibitors to ensure a sustainable impact. [Briscoe 2014, Lockwood 2012]

3 Digital Creatives Industries

While there continues to be debate regarding classification of digital creatives within the creative economy, we are ultimately interested in companies which are undoubtably significant in number and contribution [DCMS 2014]. Conceptually, including those companies developing digital technologies, which have previously been considered part of the digital economy. So, the DCI is the workforce of designers, software developers and hardware engineers in the creative economy [van Dijck 2009]. The term *creative conversations* is often used to describe when knowledge is developed within the creative industries, with the best conversations seen as an exchange of difference. So, encounters of different art forms, technologies, cultures and disciplines are a powerful element in creating new opportunities and knowledge [Crossick 2009]. The DCI are often

unique in the wider creative industries, being mostly staffed by those educated in the sciences and engineering, rather than the arts and humanities. This is made more acute by early specialisation in the education system [Casey 1985, Nutbeam 2009].

We considered collaborations, funded through the AHRC *CreativeWorks London* (CWL) Knowledge Exchange Hub and the associated ERDF *London Creative and Digital Fusion* (Fusion) project, as examples of the transfer of techniques and approaches from arts and humanities research to the DCI. We discovered several instances of this *method transfer*, with more than half involving design. So, we considered three in which approaches of the Design School of Kingston University were utilised in the development of technology. First, the creation of more socially-cohesive technology platforms with Seren [Fusion 2014]. Second, the better management of digitisation with Prospector Media. Third, the curation of cultural assets with i-Publishing Consultants and the Arc Software Consultancy. These collaborations show similar potential to the CCoI pilot SMEs [Briscoe 2014] in *method transfer* for innovation. This is also consistent with a growing recognition of the importance of design for digital innovation [DC 2014].

The current approach of the CCoI programme would appear applicable to the DCI. However, the majority of SMEs within the DCI are micro-SMEs. So, the approach of taking a *diagonal slice* may be less effective, given there would likely be less levels of hierarchy. Also, the *ripple effect* would likely be different, having to occur inter-organisationally between networks of micro-SMEs, and may therefore be more difficult to achieve. So, the programme would have to rely less upon the *diagonal slice* and more upon an inter-organisational *ripple effect* for dissemination. The use of the *double diamond* [DC 2005] design process is being re-considered, because greater granularity and flexibility would be beneficial, which we suggest also help applicability to the DCI. One suggestion is for a *honeycomb*¹ approach, which views the different quarters of the design process with more granularity and inherently recognises the potential for branching, when switching from divergence to convergence, which could be more suitable for the networks of micro-SMEs prevalent in the DCI.

4 Conclusion

We have introduced the CCoI programme, and then proposed adaptations to the CCoI programme that could enable a new model of KE for design research to the DCI of the creative economy. The CCoI approach could also be a highly effective model for KE from the wider arts and humanities research to the DCI, given their unique aspects regarding typical educational background. For example, one of the CWL/Fusion collaborations, Department of English at Birkbeck College and Spread the Word, hope to utilise research in literature. Specifically, the narrative convergence between literature and video games, to link writers with small computer game developers.

Findings from the pilot of the CCoI programme are being applied to an extended version, fine-tuning the methodology and applying to a wider group of companies. For the CCoI programme to become applicable to the DCI, we would suggest further consideration of the issues raised and then a pilot programme within the DCI.

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¹ Proposed by John Flitcroft at Seasonal InDI meeting, February 2014.

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