

Connecting Ground

Shakespeare Lives and Perceptions of the UK
in Russia, China and the Horn of Africa



Project research team

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The Institute of Cultural Capital is a strategic partnership between
University of Liverpool & Liverpool John Moores University.

‘Shakespeare = Britain’

**‘Cultural
transmission’**

**‘British culture is
one of the greatest
cultures of Earth’**

**‘As long as there are
people on Earth,
Shakespeare will also
live’**

‘Cultural co-operation’

**‘Shakespeare
as an anchor’**

**‘A chance for fellowship,
creativity, collaboration’**

**‘Leading the
development of
culture and art’**

**‘Promoting the
acceptance of British
culture’**

‘Our British friends’

‘So much in common’

Executive summary

The Institute of Cultural Capital (ICC) was commissioned by the British Council to undertake a study looking at the *Shakespeare Lives* Programme¹ in two countries and one region: Russia, China and the Horn of Africa.²

The study explores how different kinds of stakeholders (students, tourists and businesses) engaged with the Programme; the benefits and impacts of engagement for these stakeholders; and the possible effects of engagement on stakeholders' perceptions of – and trust in – the UK as a centre for culture, tourism, education and business. The study also explores how press media reported on the Programme in Russia and China, and how published articles may have shaped perceptions of and trust in the UK amongst readerships in both countries.

Background

The research team reviewed a range of pre-existing data relating to perceptions of the UK, and developed three main routes for new data gathering:

1. A survey of Programme stakeholders in each case study region
2. Follow-up interviews with a subset of surveyed stakeholders
3. Analysis of Chinese and Russian media coverage, with a focus on subject matter, tone and thematic trends.

Event listings and management documents, where available, also provided a route for understanding the diversity of the Programme itself, including in terms of:

- **Volume:** The volume of activity varied significantly between the three regions under study, with the Horn of Africa presenting 4 projects, China 32 and Russia 28.

- **Formats:** Projects and events covered a wide range of formats, including performances, exhibitions, screenings, talks, online courses, participation and education opportunities, writing initiatives, public transport branding campaigns and social media campaigns.
- **Delivery:** Many of the activities brought together multiple partners with differing leadership and funding lines. Sometimes the British Council collaborated with in-country institutions; more often, UK artists and organisations collaborated directly with those from Russia, China and the Horn of Africa. In some cases, activities were connected to existing programmes led by respective host country venues or festival organisations.

Key findings

Shakespeare as connecting ground

Most of the respondents to our stakeholder survey agreed that they like Shakespeare (more than half 'strongly agreed'). They were slightly less likely to agree that they 'understood' Shakespeare, but most agreed that Shakespeare is 'relevant in today's world'. Whilst these stakeholders were likely to be 'warm' to the UK and Shakespeare already because of their relationship to the *Shakespeare Lives* Programme, these responses confirm the ongoing value of Shakespeare as a 'connecting ground' to stakeholders from Russia, China and the Horn of Africa. Shakespeare was often seen as a means through which to encourage engagement with UK contemporary culture, from collaborations with UK companies, to learning about UK history and tourism opportunities in the country.

Shakespeare as a touchstone for both cultural heritage and contemporary cultural practices in the UK

Media coverage and interviews with stakeholders suggest that Shakespeare is a readily recognised cultural icon, whose literary status and enduring relevance are beyond dispute. In this sense, Shakespeare is seen not only as a totemic figure in British cultural heritage, but also, equally, as a touchstone for contemporary cultural practices and a vehicle through which to discuss present-day society.

Impacts: new knowledge, more participation, new activities

New knowledge of Shakespeare – represented by exposure to Shakespeare’s work for the first time or new ways of presenting / understanding Shakespeare’s work – was mentioned as a potential impact of the Programme in about two thirds of media coverage. Here, most stakeholders confirmed that they had ‘learnt something’ about and had a ‘better opinion’ of Shakespeare as a result of their engagement. Many stakeholders also reported that the Programme had impacted positively upon their arts participation, meaning that stakeholders had been encouraged to increase their involvement in arts activities because of *Shakespeare Lives*. Otherwise, some media coverage (particularly in Russia) focused upon the range of new activities / productions / material which was presented through the Programme.

Experiencing specific events vs Programme

Overall, the data reflects experiences or opinions of specific events rather than a wider or cumulative view on the Programme as a whole. Stakeholders discuss and refer to the activities they have been involved in, while media coverage is driven by the activities which are taking place, and varies in style, tone and volume significantly according to the actual event. However, we have some evidence that stakeholders who engaged with the Programme at large are slightly more likely to report positive impacts and report positive perceptions of the UK than stakeholders who engaged only with specific events.

What attracts attention: public events, celebrities and anniversary year

- **Public events:** Arts events which were open to the public at large garnered the majority of press coverage (rather than, for example, targeted education projects, or business activities such as tourism functions).
- **Celebrities:** The involvement of a globally-known star – Sir Ian McKellen – was a significant driver for media coverage in both China and Russia. Whilst this involvement probably gave significant profile to projects within *Shakespeare Lives*, it is worth noting that the very small amount of negative press coverage in the sample considered for this study tended to focus on McKellen as well, in particular his lifestyle in addition to the causes he championed during his visits. In Russia, some important cultural figures were also given significant profile in the media, including individuals within cultural institutions.
- **Programme brand / anniversary celebration:** The *Shakespeare Lives* Programme itself gained a degree of profile in the media, with some articles presenting particular activities as part of the initiative, and going on to explain the Programme’s purposes, mentioning how the events or the Programme was received. The British Council tended to be mentioned less in the media, though sometimes it provided context to *Shakespeare Lives* or was noted as a collaborator.

The importance of new collaborations

Collaborations have been a key element of the Programme. In particular, meeting new cultural partners has been a theme of both the media coverage and stakeholder responses. The media highlighted collaborations between UK cultural institutions or artists and in-country institutions and artists, though other kinds of collaboration (within countries or regions, or across different sectors) were also mentioned.

Most surveyed stakeholders noted that their involvement with *Shakespeare Lives* helped them to meet new cultural partners and, more generally, British people. Stakeholders were positive about both existing collaborations with other arts organisations as part of the Programme, and potential new collaborations as a result of the Programme.

Beyond arts and cultural collaborations, media coverage (particularly in China) highlighted different kinds of partnerships / connections, and some stakeholders also reported positive benefits in terms of more opportunities to engage with business in the UK, or potential new business partners.

Enhancing positive perceptions of, and trust in, the UK

In terms of their broader perspectives on the UK, stakeholders felt that their knowledge of the UK and of the English language had also been impacted positively by the Programme. Through the interviews, there is some evidence that Programme activities enabled stakeholders to learn more about the UK, improved their perceptions of the UK and prompted them to think about their relationship with the UK.

In the case of the Horn of Africa, for example, respondents felt that they had gained new knowledge of the UK. Respondents from the region found this particularly valuable given that their experience of Anglophone cultures is one rooted in the US, and *Shakespeare Lives* therefore provided these stakeholders with the means to consider the UK as a study and travel destination for the first time, expanding their outlook of the English-speaking world. In China and Russia, media coverage also suggested new knowledge on the UK as a potential outcome of some events.³

On the whole, surveyed stakeholders held a favourable attitude towards the UK, which supports the view that there is a positive relationship between engagement in cultural relations with the UK and trust in people of the UK. This corroborates previous British Council research concerning the positive association of the UK with trust, specifically that of 2012's *Trust Pays*. For some stakeholders, the opportunity to work with organisations and individuals from the UK was important in upholding this trust. This was evidenced by instances of collaboration in which interviewees demonstrated positive attitudes towards their British colleagues, the celebratory attitude of the Chinese press towards working with British institutions, and survey respondents outlining benefits of collaboration such as meeting new business partners. More generally, stakeholders were positive about the arts scene in the UK, about wanting to visit the UK and about the welcome that people in the UK might give them.

Areas for further exploration

This study is limited in its findings by the scope and circumstances of the research. However, the findings which have emerged suggest some rich areas for further exploration.⁴

1. **Returning to stakeholders one year on.** This would enable a longitudinal element to the research by examining where collaborations have moved on to; whether individuals have pursued ambitions to visit the UK; and, more generally, whether positive perceptions of the UK continue in the longer term. Important areas to explore further are: how different types of engagement have affected stakeholders; and how different sectors (beyond the cultural sector) perceive the UK in the aftermath of *Shakespeare Lives*.
2. **Continuing a case study approach.** The data available suggest important cultural differences in the reception of the *Shakespeare Lives* Programme across world regions. The data available suggests that pre-existing cultural differences between regions were important in influencing the reception of the *Shakespeare Lives* programme.¹ In terms of exploring and understanding the value of international cultural relations and dedicated programming to keep building trust in the UK, these differences are crucial. As such, future research should still be framed with a varied case study approach in mind.
3. **Exploring appreciation of the anniversary Programme vs individual events.** Finally, the findings in this report reveal some useful differences about the way in which stakeholders and the media perceive the value of international cultural relations initiatives like *Shakespeare Lives*. It would be helpful to explore whether awareness of the broad Programme (beyond specific events) and of the British Council as a key actor, champion and collaborator, sustain beyond 2016 as 400th anniversary year.

¹ For example, see All the World's for information on the Chinese cultural revolution banning Shakespeare. This means that Chinese stakeholders have only been exposed to the Bard's work in relatively recent times).

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1. Introduction

1.1 Research focus

The *Shakespeare Lives* programme, a 12-month programme of activities on the 400th anniversary of the death of Shakespeare, involved the British Council working across a number of countries on many projects and activities. This report provides case studies of *Shakespeare Lives* Programme activities that took place in Russia, China and the Horn of Africa – examining the engagement of different stakeholders (specifically students, tourists and businesses) within each region, and exploring how these different stakeholders perceive and trust the UK.

‘Trust’ is a concept understood within international business and trading as a positive factor in contributing towards reducing transaction costs,⁵ and a trait which is internationally associated with the British people.⁶ An objective of *Shakespeare Lives* was to continue to foster this sense of trust from international businesses. It had been hoped that the Programme would, in the longer term, facilitate international trading as a result of intercultural development through forms of soft power.

1.2 Methods and data sources

The research team has worked with British Council staff based both in the UK and in the different countries which are case-studied here to understand the extent of the *Shakespeare Lives* Programme in each area.

1.2.1 Desktop research and baseline analysis

The most relevant sources we have relied on to assess existing perceptions of the UK, with a

focus on trust, are the following reports by the British Council and Visit Britain.

1. The British Council (2012) *Trust Pays*
2. The British Council (2014) *As Others See Us*
3. Visit Britain (2014) *Market and Trade Profile Russia*
4. The British Council (2016) *All the World's*

This report refers to these sources, where appropriate, throughout.

1.2.2 Stakeholder survey and follow-up interviews

In-country stakeholders were engaged using an online survey to gather feedback on *Shakespeare Lives* from those who were involved in the Programme. This survey, distributed via the networks of the British Council to the case study regions, invited 260 people who had experienced the Programme either as an audience member or reviewer, active participant, or organiser of an event. In total, we received 73 responses to this survey. The questions in the survey sought to collect data on the respondents’ knowledge and perceptions of Shakespeare and the UK, the depth and nature of their engagement with the *Shakespeare Lives* Programme, and the value derived from this engagement.

In identifying stakeholders for the survey, some were also invited to engage in interviews. In total, 42 personal interviews were conducted. Interviews were tailored by the research team to target individual stakeholders by event and position – for example, whether the stakeholder was a co-ordinator of an event or a participant.

Co-ordinators were asked whether they would like to stage a similar event again, whilst participants were asked about their motivation to participate. All interviewees were asked about their perceptions of Britain and British people. Interviews either took place via live feed (Skype) and were then transcribed, or in writing via email and later translated (if not conducted in English).

It is worth noting that engaging stakeholders – for both the survey and interviews – was challenging and required significant input from British Council staff in-country (see Appendix B for more information).

1.2.3 Media content analysis

The broader profile, awareness and reception of the *Shakespeare Lives* Programme was explored through collating and analysing articles from written media within each country relating to that country’s programme. Clippings were provided by the British Council teams in China and Russia, covering the period October 2015 to December 2016. (The Horn of Africa provided five articles for analysis, all of which had been published in-house at British Council Sudan. Given this absence of suitable material, the Horn of Africa does not feature in this dataset.) A sampling approach was used, and some exclusions made (i.e. applying to duplicate articles, those with no reach or those over 2,000 words in length) to provide a meaningful and manageable sample. In total, 675 out of 9,989 articles were coded from the Chinese media, and 2,391 of 8,152 in the corresponding Russian media.⁷

The clippings were analysed using a coding book, which was developed using information from British Council staff. The clippings and coding focused on events forming part of the *Shakespeare Lives* Programme in each of the countries. Overall, these clippings covered 19 programmed events in China and 21 programmed events in Russia – plus a range of

other activities on the fringe of the official Programme which had not been included in the coding book (see Appendix A on some of the challenges relating to identifying all the events / projects in the Programme).

For the purposes of this report, the analysis of these media samples looks primarily at the way in which different events were covered – focusing in particular on a carefully selected cross-section of events (see Table 1) that provide a snapshot of the diversity of programming delivered. Here, large-scale, medium-scale, and small-scale events have been chosen for closer investigation from the Programme in China and Russia in order to give an idea of the outcome of a wide range of activities and activity types which formed part of *Shakespeare Lives*. (By way of context, the events referred to in Table 1 which took place in China account for just under half of all the articles within our Chinese sample, whilst the eight events which took place in Russia account for just over half of all the articles within our Russian sample.)

Some of the events in this list also enabled basic comparative analysis between approaches to media coverage across the two regions, due to being relatively similar in nature. These are:

- Events involving Sir Ian McKellen (Shakespeare on Film in China, McKellen’s Visit and Midsummer in Russia)
- The Shanghai and Moscow Metro branding projects.

Table 1. Media case study events

China	
Folio Translation Competition	Winners submitted their translations of excerpts of Shakespeare’s work to be featured in the bilingual folio and win a trip to the UK
The Bilingual Folio	Book launch event to celebrate the bilingual edition of Shakespeare’s complete works in translation
Hallé	Comprising of a masterclass for students, a VIP dinner, and three performances by Hallé, the event presented music from Shakespeare
The English Concert	The English Concert performed music popular during the Shakespearean era
SDAC	SDAC (Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre) produced a new Chinese version of Henry V with the RSC. SDAC worked with Gecko Theatre troupe to produce and perform ‘The Dreamer’
Shakespeare Shanghai Metro	A Shakespeare-themed metro ran on the Shanghai Metro’s Line 2 for four months
Shakespeare on Film	Nationwide screenings of Shakespeare’s plays, launched by Sir Ian McKellen at the Shanghai International Film Festival
Russia	
Arzamas Lectures	A series of video lectures on Shakespeare
Arzamas App	A free emoji Shakespeare app for smartphone users
Twelfth Night	Revival of Declan Donnellan’s acclaimed all-male Twelfth Night in Russian with Russian actors
Tretyakov exhibition	The exhibition of portraits of Shakespeare and other famous Britons, accompanied by a free evening lecture Programme
Shakespeare Moscow Metro	A Shakespeare-themed train with QR codes throughout to give passengers access to a mini-site to learn more about the playwright, education, and tourism in the UK
Loud Allowed	Recitation competition, including the works of Shakespeare
Midsummer	Festival dedicated to Shakespeare featuring concerts, theatre productions, screenings, lectures, and master classes
McKellen Visit	The actor spoke at Midsummer, rode the Shakespeare Moscow Metro, and attended networking events

2. The *Shakespeare Lives* Programme

2.1 Overview

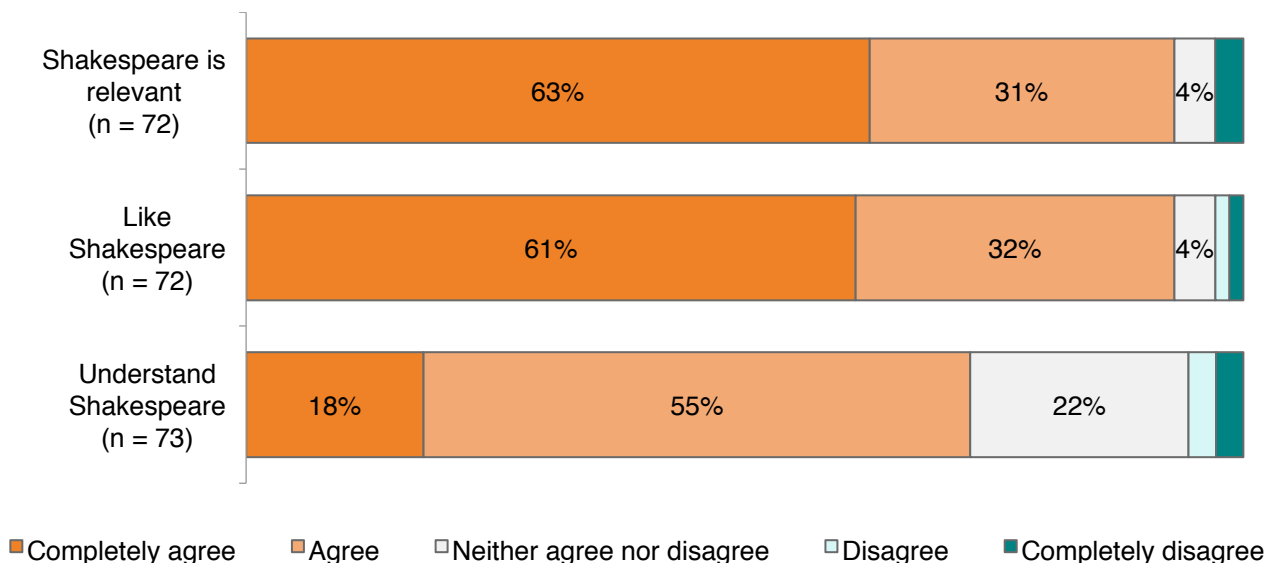
The *Shakespeare Lives* Programme varied significantly between the three case study regions in terms of both volume and complexion. 64 projects were identified across the three regions, with the Horn of Africa presenting the fewest projects (4) and China the most projects (32). Projects included one-off events, online courses and multi-activity participation opportunities, albeit with the majority of projects involving arts activities of some description, including the screening and digital streaming of Shakespeare productions from Britain; new productions of Shakespeare involving British theatre companies; exhibitions relating to Shakespeare; contemporary writers responding to sonnets; and workshops and outreach activities.

Other kinds of activities ranged from educational events (a day of Shakespeare-related activities in schools, the Massive Open Online Course which provided an opportunity to practise English through an exploration of Shakespeare’s legacy) and activities which used

Shakespeare to showcase the UK (e.g. to potential international students, tourism businesses and agencies, etc.). Within the arts-focused Programme, some activities included launch events or VIP events, which provided an opportunity for the British Council to support engagement with key agencies and individuals within the hosting country. Other events focused on honing writing and performance skills with the use of facilitators from the British arts scene. Some events and activities were one-offs – lasting a day or a few hours – whilst others included an extended run sometimes of several months (e.g. exhibitions, social media campaigns, a special-liveried train on the Moscow Metro, Shakespeare on the Shanghai Metro, etc.).

Many of the activities involved significant collaborations. These included British partnerships, collaboration with other British Council Programmes and in-country partnerships.⁸

Figure 1. *Shakespeare Lives* and attitudes to Shakespeare among survey respondents



2.2 Engagement by stakeholders

Through the survey of stakeholders, 73 responses were received from those in the arts, business, tourism, education, media and digital technology sectors, reflecting a range of different ages, occupations and types of engagement with the *Shakespeare Lives* Programme.⁹

By way of context, previous British Council research includes the finding that 76% of Chinese respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they found Shakespeare’s work relevant today.¹⁰ Consistent with this previous British Council research, most of those responding to our survey were ‘fans’ of Shakespeare, reporting that they liked and understood the playwright’s work and believed that it continued to be relevant in today’s world (see Figure 1). By and large, these figures varied little by case study region, although the proportion of respondents that agreed to some extent that they *understood* Shakespeare varied more markedly, with the 100% of Horn of Africa contrasting rather sharply with the 74% of Russian respondents and 65% of Chinese respondents who agreed to some extent with this statement.¹¹

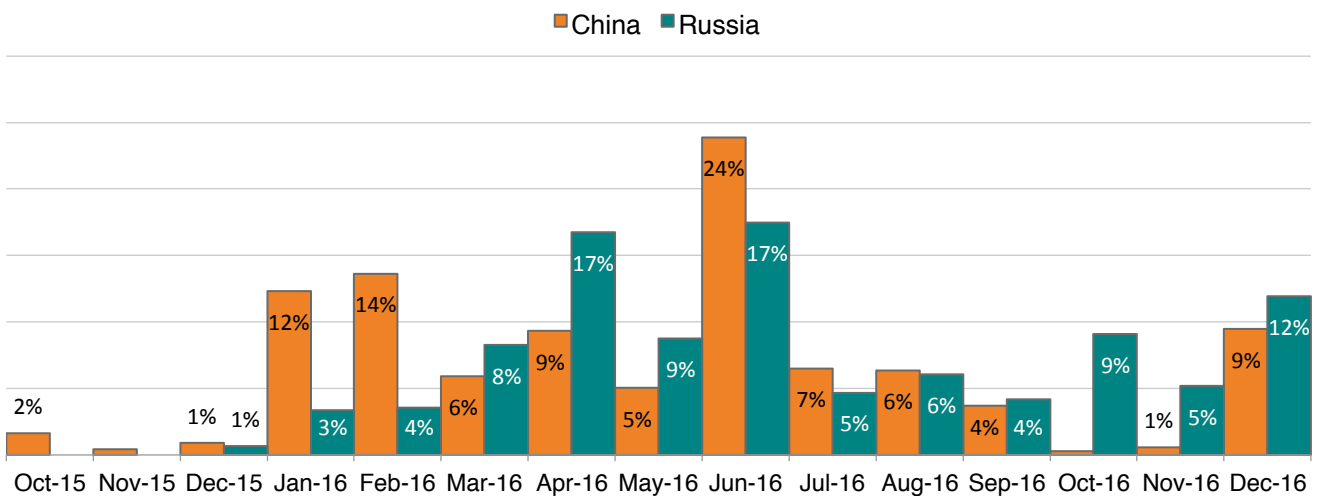
By contrast, those who agreed that they like Shakespeare and those who agreed that ‘Shakespeare is relevant in today’s world’ varied only slightly between different countries. Equally, those reporting a higher level of engagement with the Programme were more likely to state that they liked or understood Shakespeare. However, once again, these differences were only marginal and indeed disappear altogether with respect to the question on Shakespeare’s relevance.¹²

Overall, there were 34 interviews with Chinese stakeholders, six with Russian stakeholders, and two with stakeholders in the Horn of Africa. All interviewees were favourable towards *Shakespeare Lives*, going as far as calling the events ‘first-class’; referring to collaborations with ‘British friends’; and deeming Shakespeare to ‘have an important place in modern life, leading the development of culture and art’.

2.3 Awareness and media profile of the Programme

The media content analysis undertaken for this project tells us a lot about when, why, where and

Figure 2. Proportion of Programme coverage per month



how *Shakespeare Lives* was written about in China and Russia.

From Figure 2, we can observe, for example, that media coverage of the programme tended to be concentrated, as one would expect, in months marked either by a single high profile event (e.g. Shakespeare on Film with Ian McKellen for China in June 2016) or a series of events (as seems to have been the case for peaks in Russian coverage). We also know that around half of the Chinese coverage came from relatively long articles (more than 800 words), in contrast to Russian coverage of the Programme – the vast majority of which came from either very short (less than 200 words) or short (200-400 words) articles. In both countries, coverage of the Programme came from a wide range of different media sources, representing diverse locations and reaching audiences of vastly contrasting sizes. In Russia, coverage of the programme stretched far beyond Moscow-based outlets, eastwards into Kazan, Yekaterinburg and Tomsk – and even as far as Vladivostok. For the Russian coverage of the Programme, articles that reached between 1,000 – 10,000 people were most common (27%). In China, by contrast, there was slightly less range in the location of reporting media, with the dominance of Shanghai and Beijing perhaps simply reflective of differences in the media landscapes of the two countries. Yet even here, we found clusters of coverage in cities as far away from Beijing as Guangzhou and Chongqing, with articles that reached fewer than 100 people most common overall (34%).

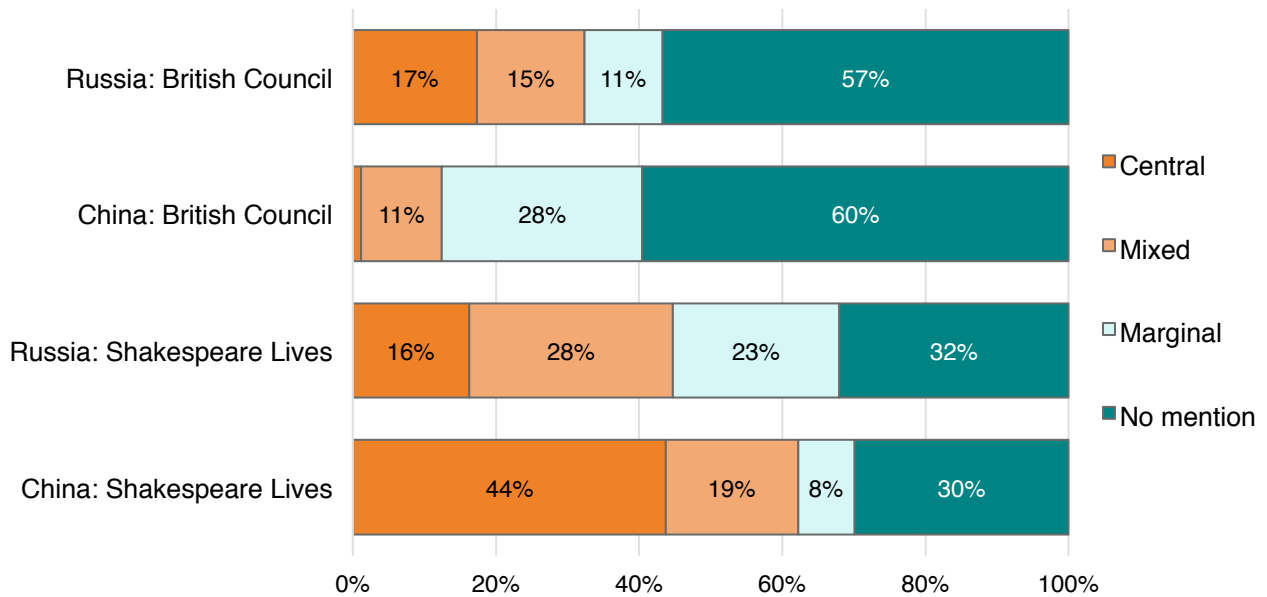
Across the seven Chinese events highlighted in this report (see Table 1), only a very small proportion of coverage came from outlets with a significant reach (this was the case across all the coverage of all events we sampled from China). In contrast, 22% of articles relating to the combined Arzamas events in Russia came from outlets with a reach of between 10,000 and 100,000, and 22% of articles from outlets reaching more than 1,000,000. Twelfth Night also had more than 17% of their coverage with outlets reaching more than 1,000,000 – on the

whole, these two events received more coverage in larger-scale publications than was typical for other events in Russia.

Looking at the content of the media coverage itself, in both countries the most common types of events which gained media coverage were arts events, accounting for 85% of all Programme coverage in China and 55% of coverage in Russia. Particularly well represented events within the sample for China included Shakespeare on Film, which accounted for 29% of all coverage coded for China; the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) on tour, which accounted for 19% of all coverage; and the National Theatre Live screening, which accounted for 13% of all coverage. Russian coverage, meanwhile, was dominated by the Loud Allowed Tour, which accounted for 16% of all coverage in the sample; Theatre HD, which accounted for 12% of Russian coverage; the Shakespeare Moscow Metro, with 11% of all Russian coverage; and an exhibition at the State Tretyakov Gallery, which accounted for 11% of coverage. Taken together, the Russian events featuring Sir Ian McKellen – the Midsummer Night's Festival and McKellen's visit – accounted for 9% and 5% of all Russian coverage, respectively.

Aside from the volume of Programme coverage and the degree to which particular events captured the imagination of the media, we are also able to judge the extent to which *Shakespeare Lives* and the British Council were explicitly profiled – with help from coding variables which captured both the main theme of each article and the degree to which particular brands and institutions were central to media coverage (see Appendix C). In terms of the thematic focus of coverage, *Shakespeare Lives* events / Programme were presented as the main theme of 80% of articles in China; whilst in Russia, the corresponding figure was 43%. In terms of centrality, meanwhile, we know that Shakespeare himself was central to around half of Programme reporting in both countries (47% in China, 50% in Russia), but with striking

Figure 3. Centrality of *Shakespeare Lives* and British Council in Chinese and Russian media



differences in the degree to which coverage in the two countries emphasised the British Council and the Programme itself. As shown by Figure 3, the British Council was much more central to Russian coverage than it was to Chinese coverage, but with specific references to the *Shakespeare Lives* Programme being considerably more central to Chinese coverage.

Of course, the centrality of Shakespeare, *Shakespeare Lives* and the British Council had the potential to vary significantly by event. In China, events such as the English Concert were reported with *Shakespeare Lives* central in almost all cases, for example, yet with the British Council never positioned centrally. By comparison, events in Russia, such as the Arzamas lectures, seemed to have reflected stronger branding or associations with the British Council and correspondingly less focus on *Shakespeare Lives* as a brand. At the same time, there were events, such as the McKellen events in both countries, which were very much in accordance with the headline trends alluded to by Figure 3 – with *Shakespeare Lives* evidently more central to coverage of McKellen in China than in Russia; but with the British Council and

Shakespeare himself more central to discussion within the Russian media coverage.

The media analysis also extended to the kinds of collaboration and stakeholders mentioned in coverage of the Programme. The most prominent stakeholder associated with *Shakespeare Lives* events in China, perhaps unsurprisingly, was Sir Ian McKellen, who appeared in 29% of all articles. A quotation from the press goes some way to explaining McKellen’s dominance of the Chinese media:

‘The combination of Shakespeare and Ian McKellen appeals to thousands of Chinese artists and audiences’.

Meanwhile, in the Russian media, Michael Bird was the most referenced stakeholder (5% of articles), followed by Zelfira Tregulova, director of the Tretyakov Gallery, who was also mentioned significantly in the coverage of the Tretyakov exhibition.

Where articles referred to collaboration taking place, 58% of Chinese articles talked about

collaboration with a British cultural institution and presented it in a mostly celebratory manner. One article, with reference to a screening event, stated that:

‘Recently, Chinese films have begun to be introduced more widely into the UK market, resulting in an increasingly close co-operation between the two countries.’

The most common type of collaboration in Russian articles was listed as with the British Council (30%), which was also frequently presented descriptively. Further to this, other kinds of collaboration were reported, with the Bilingual Folio the only event to stress intra-national collaboration. In 4% of articles in the Chinese media, no collaboration was referenced; this was also the case in 41% of articles from Russia, possibly suggesting that the Russian media provided a more ‘contained’ response to event activities themselves, rather than considering the possible implications of collaborations. Considering events that provide some kind of comparison between China and Russia, projects involving Sir Ian McKellen demonstrate a relatively uniform style of coverage in the Chinese media. Here, 98% of articles present the event as a collaboration between a British artist and Chinese local / political institutions, with the remaining articles having no collaboration noted. However, in the Russian media, between McKellen’s Visit and Midsummer, six different types of collaboration were noted in the press (four for McKellen’s Visit, and six for Midsummer). Midsummer’s main collaborators, according to the media, were the British Council and Russian cultural institutions (24% of collaboration linked to the event overall) and intra-national collaborations in the case of McKellen’s Visit (26%). This was similar to the media treatment of the Shakespeare Shanghai Metro, where 100% of collaborations were presented in the press as between British cultural institution(s) and Chinese cultural institution(s). However, the Shakespeare Moscow Metro articles either made no mention

of collaboration (67%) or focused on work between the British Council and Russian businesses (32%), with only a very few mentioning collaboration between the British Council and Russian local / political institutions (1%) or intra-national collaboration (0.4%).

It is worth noting, at this stage, also, that much of the coverage we collated and analysed from China tended to be very factual reporting of events or the wider Programme (almost like more detailed versions of event listings). An example of this style of reporting is as follows:

‘(The Programme) is developing educational links between the UK and China, sharing the best of UK education and inspiring Chinese students to study in the UK, particularly subjects such as English literature, theatre, performing arts, and film.’

‘*Shakespeare Lives* will support the work of British charities in China and other countries around the world in order to provide more educational opportunities towards students in poor areas.’

Despite removing clear headline duplications from the Chinese media sample, these kinds of reports were often duplicated in multiple media outlets under slightly different titles – making them difficult to identify and root out. For the purposes of this study, it is important to recognise, therefore, that whilst this type of media coverage may raise the profile and awareness of the Programme and individual events, the relative absence of meaningful commentary makes it difficult to understand how these activities may have been received and understood.

3. Programme impacts

3.1 Impacts reported by stakeholders

The stakeholder survey asked respondents a range of questions about the effects of the Programme. Most respondents reported that their involvement in *Shakespeare Lives* either had ‘a lot of impact’ (22%) or ‘some impact’ (50%) on their skills and abilities. This varied by geographical region, with Russian respondents least likely to report ‘some’ or ‘a lot’ of impact (at 58%), followed by Chinese respondents (71%), and respondents from the Horn of Africa (100%). In general, there does not appear to be a significant relationship between the depth of engagement with the Programme and skills impact (see Appendix B).

Similarly significant impact was reported with respect to participation in arts events, with 24% of respondents reporting that *Shakespeare Lives* had ‘a lot of impact’ on their arts participation, and with 43% reporting ‘some impact’. Again, however, responses varied markedly according to region of origin – with only 11% of Russian respondents reporting some impact on arts participation, as opposed to 83% of Chinese

respondents, and 100% of respondents from the Horn of Africa.

The vast majority of respondents ‘agreed’ or ‘completely agreed’ that their involvement in *Shakespeare Lives* had taught them something new about Shakespeare (90%) or left them with a better opinion of Shakespeare (88%). This was true of both ‘high’ and ‘low’ engagers, although ‘low’ engagers were even more likely to report having formed a better opinion of Shakespeare (94%, versus 83% of ‘high’ engagers). However, Russian respondents were again least likely to agree, with only 74% agreeing that they had learnt something new about Shakespeare (compared to 95% of Chinese respondents and 100% of respondents from the Horn of Africa). Furthermore, only 68% agreed that the Programme had given them a better opinion of Shakespeare (compared to 93% of Chinese respondents and 100% of respondents from the Horn of Africa).

This may have been a result of the events’ focus (for example, Twelfth Night being performed in Russian may expose stakeholders to a new interpretation of Shakespeare, but does not focus on developing knowledge of Shakespeare otherwise), or simply due to societal differences.

Figure 4. Impact of *Shakespeare Lives* on respondents’ knowledge of & engagement with the UK

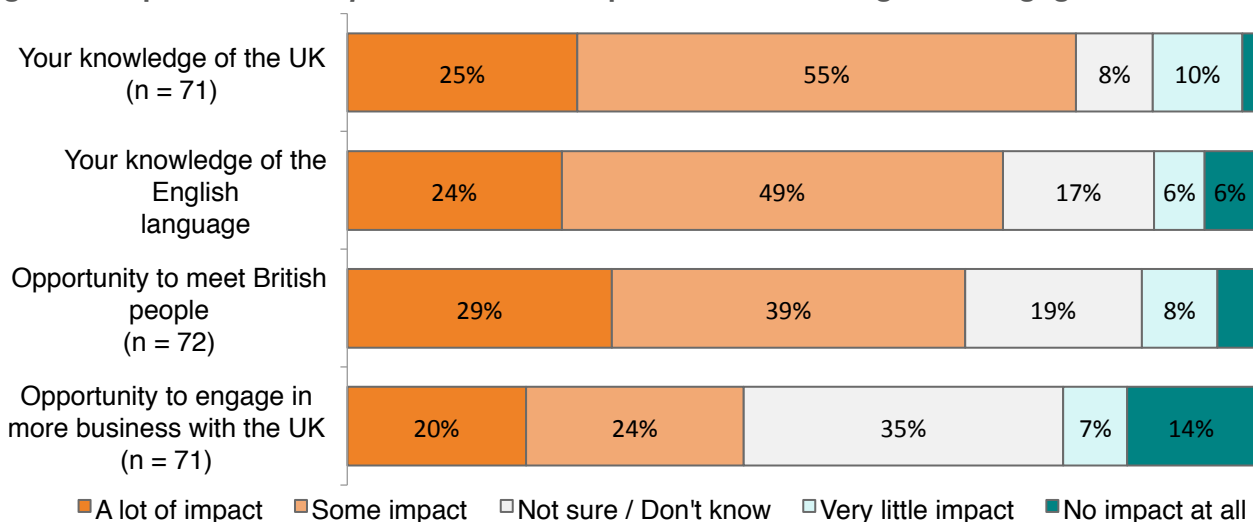
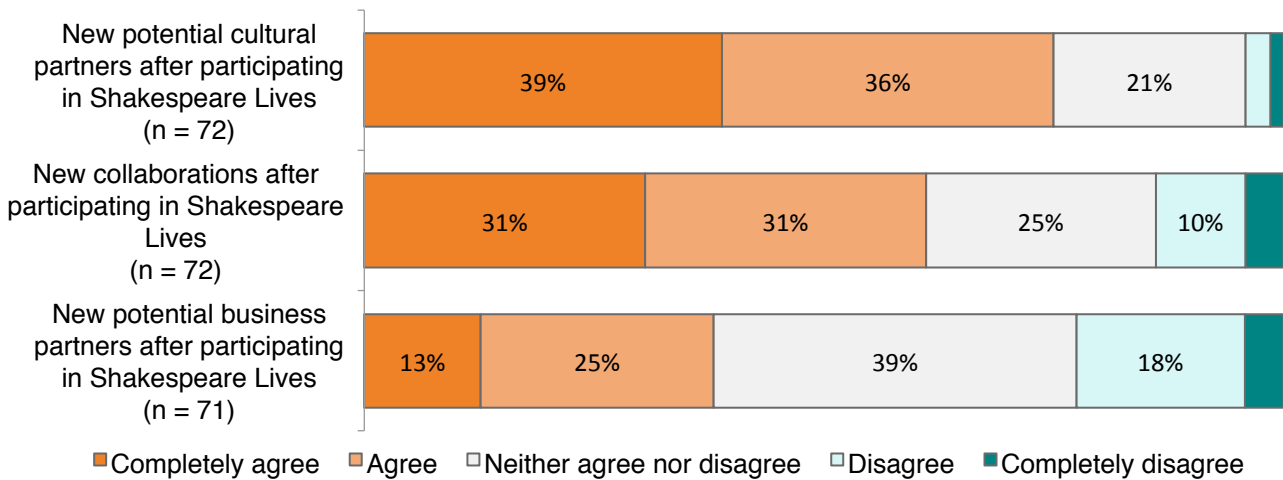


Figure 5. *Shakespeare Lives* and its impacts on collaborative and partnership working among survey respondents.



As respondents to interviews from the Horn of Africa outlined, typical exposure to Anglophone culture in this region has a focus on the US; therefore, respondents may have had limited exposure, if any, to Shakespeare previously. In China, the effects of the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) meant that Shakespeare’s work was banned for over a decade. Although the Bard’s oeuvre was reintroduced into Chinese society in 1976 (see *All the World’s* for references to this), China’s recent social history may have had an effect on exposure to Shakespeare up to the present day. In Russia, by contrast, exposure to British literature and interpretations of Shakespeare’s works have been present in the country for a considerably longer period, perhaps explaining why Russian respondents claimed to have learned something about Shakespeare less frequently.

Shakespeare Lives had a marked impact on respondents’ knowledge of and opportunity to engage with the UK, as shown by Figure 4. One interviewee from the Horn of Africa stated,

‘In Ethiopia, there’s a lot more American movies and music, so you’re not exposed to British culture. When I met the facilitators from the UK, I saw that they were actually really

cool and nice people: the movies and the writers that they mention are interesting, it’s not what you usually see or hear in the mainstream media... That was like an awakening for me. I find the quality of thinking much better than the American style’.

Most respondents reported a positive impact on their knowledge of the UK and the English language, and on their opportunity to meet British people; again there were differences in the figures reported depending on the region of the respondents, with respondents from Russia being less likely to report impact in each case. The relationship between depth of Programme engagement and knowledge and engagement with the UK was more mixed, with ‘low’ engagers significantly more likely to report an increase in knowledge of the UK, but with ‘high’ engagers reporting considerably greater impact on opportunities to engage in business with the UK.

The online survey also sought to measure impacts on the respondents’ cultural and commercial collaborative activity and partnership working (see Figure 5). Most respondents agreed that *Shakespeare Lives* enabled them to meet new potential cultural partners and develop new collaborations; a significant proportion of

respondents report having met new potential business partners. Respondents from the Horn of Africa were mostly likely to report positive impacts; overall, respondents from China were less likely to do so. Significant differences are also apparent in the figures reported by ‘high’ and ‘low’ engagers with respect to the meeting of new potential business partners (51% of ‘high’ engagers ‘agreed’ or ‘completely agreed’ that the Programme had introduced them to new potential business partners, compared to 20% of ‘low’ engagers). However, this is likely to reflect, in part, the composition of respondents from the Horn of Africa, almost all of whom were ‘high’ engagers.

Positive results were also revealed with regards to the impact of *Shakespeare Lives* on respondents’ collaboration with other arts organisations and artists, as shown by Figure 6. Again, these results are affected by the very positive tenor of responses from the Horn of Africa, where 100% of the respondents reported that the Programme had either ‘a lot of impact’ or ‘some impact’ on their collaborations with other arts organisations and artists (compared to figures of 52% and 50% for China and Russia, respectively); as with elsewhere in our analysis, this also correlates with ‘high’ versus ‘low’ engagers, reflecting the impact of those high-engaging respondents from the Horn of Africa.

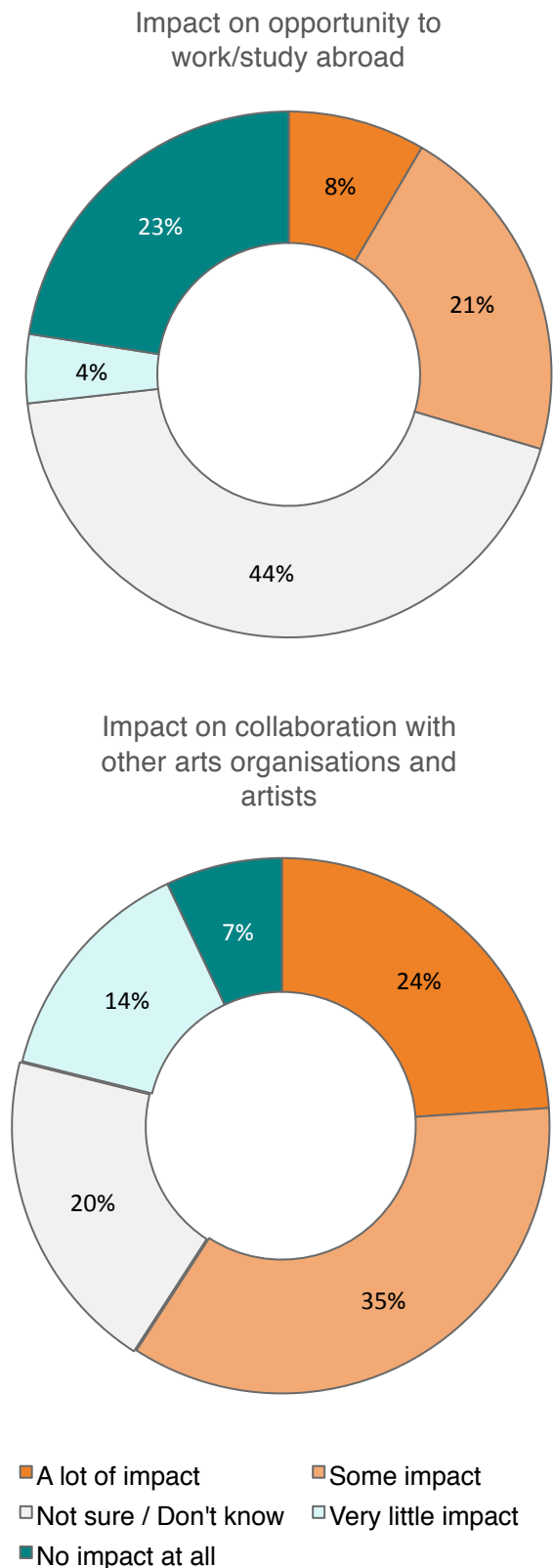
Interviewees were also asked to reflect upon the benefits of their involvement in the *Shakespeare Lives* Programme, such as an improved knowledge of the UK and/or Shakespeare. In the vast majority of cases, respondents replied that they had bettered their knowledge of one and/or both, with one interviewee vocalising that,

‘I didn’t know much about British culture before... now I’m open more to explore’.

A Chinese respondent claimed that their specific activity allowed them to see

‘the origin of British culture’

Figure 6. *Shakespeare Lives* and its impact on collaborative work and opportunities to work or study abroad.



expressing their wish to learn more about British customs and literary heritage. One Russian respondent expressed his understanding of Shakespeare to be integral to British identity, stating

‘Shakespeare = Britain, just like Pushkin = Russia’.

Several Chinese respondents made clear their views of the significance of Shakespeare for cultural engagement in contemporary society, with strong opinions that *Shakespeare Lives* activities had provided motivation for participants to not only begin to understand British culture, but also to see the commonalities between British and Chinese heritage and cultures. One respondent was particularly enthused, maintaining,

‘It’s so encouraging to find people in both China the UK sharing so much in common, especially culturally’.

Respondents from the Horn of Africa echoed this sentiment, in fact pointing out that the *Shakespeare Lives* Programme was quite unique in its prioritising of cultural engagement through the use of Shakespeare in particular.

British people were considered to be creative across the three regions, with one Russian interviewee being particularly enthusiastic,

‘I don’t think that there is anyone who could say that the British aren’t creative. British culture is one of the greatest cultures on Earth’.

Shakespeare Lives was specifically seen in China as confirming the British creative identity,

‘I’ve always thought that British artists are creative. After working with Gecko, I’m more sure about that.’

Responses centring on creativity often led to the UK’s reputation vis-a-vis education, something which was also reflected in the Chinese media, with one article claiming:

‘The theatre culture and education system in the UK should be adopted by Chinese schools, as it will enhance the students’ abilities of logical thinking and oral expression, which will improve their confidence’.

A response from the Horn of Africa considered the UK to be an excellent environment in which to challenge oneself academically, with several Chinese respondents putting emphasis on the significance of education in relation to cultural transmission, with a stakeholder maintaining that *Shakespeare Lives* SMARTtalk event has roused their students’ interests in British culture more generally. However, one Chinese respondent provided a particularly even answer to whether or not British people are creative by stating that

‘Of course Britain has creative talent – both in the field of the arts, and in science and technology’.

Science and technology was not an area focused on by *Shakespeare Lives* in China, which indicates a wide ranging previous knowledge and positive perceptions of the UK as a centre for creativity on the part of the respondent.

On the whole, when asked about the benefits of being involved, stakeholders raised a range of aspects. Some focused on new knowledge:

‘Now I am more knowledgeable about poetry’.

‘I learnt a lot from the whole project, and I would like to keep working on Shakespeare’.

‘I’ve learned a great deal about British culture and people from the events I experienced in 2016 in particular’.

Others discussed the processes or types of activities which were involved:

‘Education is the most important means of cultural transmission’

‘Chinese students have little opportunity to study drama in the Chinese education system. Studying drama is both an opportunity to promote artistic expression and a way to promote the acceptance of the British culture.’

‘The Programme provided us with a chance for fellowship, creativity, collaboration, and opportunities with Shakespeare as an anchor. I’m grateful to have been part of it!’

And, for some, their involvement had prompted them to think about their future relationship with the UK:

‘The UK is definitely one of the places I would consider working’

‘We hope that (Manchester and Wuhan) will have more exchanges in the way of cultural co-operation’.

3.2 Impacts as reported by the media

Looking at the ways in which media coverage referred to the potential impacts of Programme events, by far the most frequently forecasted impact was new knowledge of Shakespeare. Where the coverage noted innovation of some kind, the most frequently mentioned type of innovation in China was new types of

partnerships / connections (33% of Chinese articles mention this); whilst in Russia, it was ‘engaging with new materials’ (36% of all Russian articles mention this).¹³

In examining particular events in more detail, however, it is clear that certain events were strongly associated with other kinds of potential impact. For example, the exhibition at the Tretyakov was strongly associated in media coverage with potentially prompting new knowledge of the UK as an impact (88% of articles on the exhibition referred to this). In the case of Loud Allowed, similarly, new training opportunities were most frequently highlighted as an innovative aspect of the project.

The forecasted impact of some individual events also reveals different media approaches in China and Russia. Taking the Shanghai and Moscow Metro events as an example, firstly we can see that in both media sets, the most common forecasted impact was that of new knowledge of Shakespeare. However, on closer inspection, in China this is referenced as the *only* forecasted impact for the events, whereas in Russia, a total of two different types of impact are referenced. This considered, this may demonstrate another way in which the Russian media is predisposed to more nuanced journalism. The Moscow Metro project received considerably more coverage than the project in Shanghai. Furthermore, the Moscow Metro was seen to have an impact of new knowledge of Shakespeare (43% of articles), as well as having an influence on the media exposure of Shakespeare in this special new setting (36% of articles), it is worth noting.

By comparison, looking at events featuring Sir Ian McKellen, in Russia the most frequent impacts were new knowledge of Shakespeare (51% of media on Ian McKellen visit, 91% of media on Midsummer). This was similar in China’s Shakespeare on Film, in which 70% of articles communicated new knowledge of the Bard’s work.

4. Wider perceptions of the UK

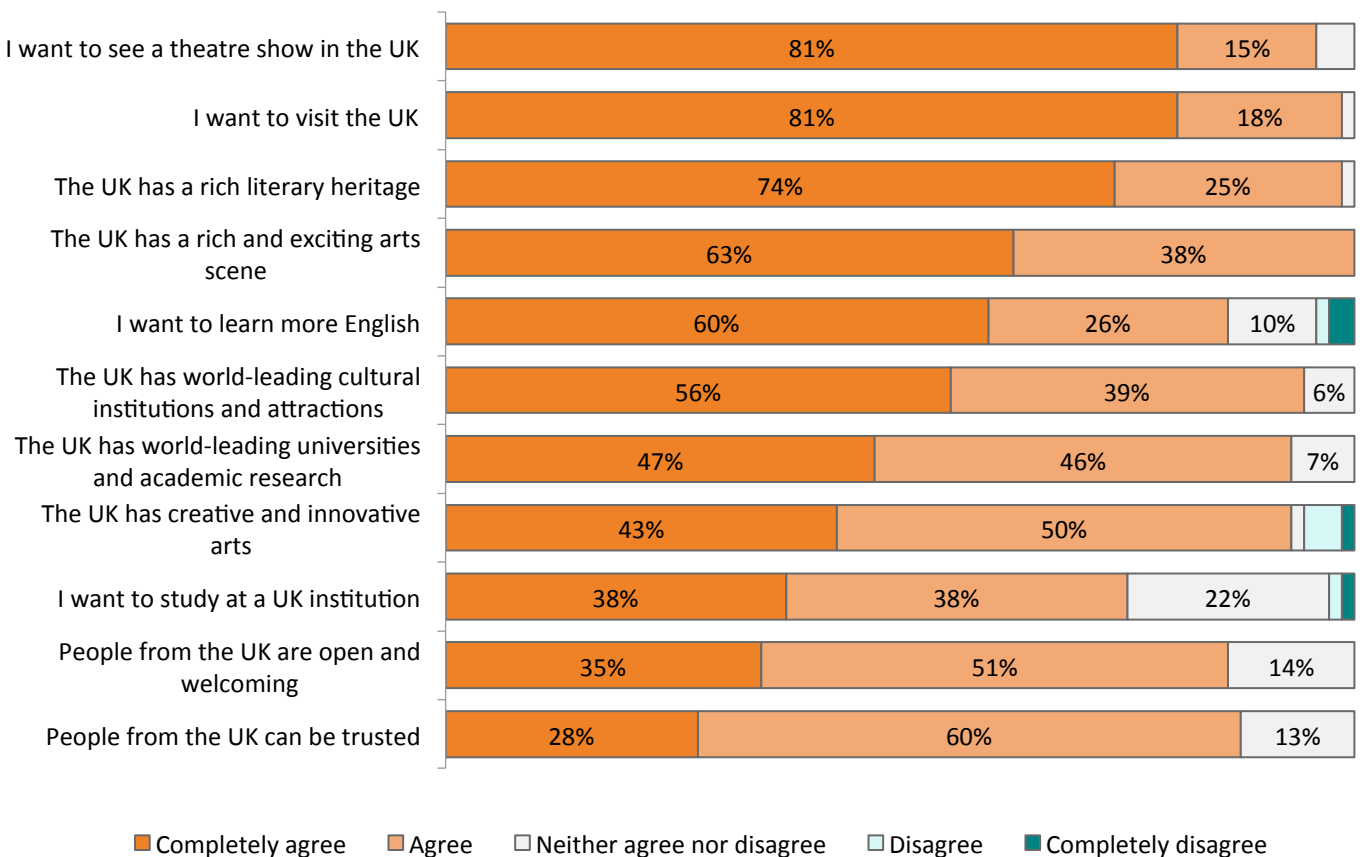
4.1 What stakeholders thought about the UK

As Figure 7 demonstrates, most of the survey respondents had very positive perceptions of the UK and British people. On the whole, neither the region of the respondent nor the degree of Programme engagement appeared to result in any significant variation in attitudes, although in a few cases respondents from Russia were less likely to give positive responses than those from elsewhere,¹⁴ and ‘high’ engagers were generally more positive than ‘low’ engagers – albeit typically by a narrow margin.

Data from elsewhere enables us to put this stakeholder survey into some context: the British

Council’s *Trust Pays* study reports that cultural relations with the UK correlate with greater trust in the people of the UK (demonstrated by respondents to that survey from both Russia and China); that *more* engagement (i.e. engaging more than once) with cultural relations correlates with *more* trust; and that engagement with cultural relations which are facilitated by the British Council is also positively associated with more trust in the people of the UK. Net trust in people in the UK from our survey is +74% for respondents from Russia and +95% for respondents from China; for those who had participated in British Council facilitated cultural relations and were part of the survey for *Trust Pays*, net trust in people in the UK was +71% for respondents from Russia and +60% for respondents from China.

Figure 7. Perceptions of the UK and British people among survey respondents (n = 72).



A common question for participants and contributors to the *Shakespeare Lives* Programme who were interviewed was ‘Would you say that people from the UK are trustworthy? If so, why?’. Here, *Shakespeare Lives* activities were seen as a vehicle for promoting trust between all countries involved. In China, one interviewee responded that ‘this experience gave me a sense of trust and intimacy towards the British’, deeming British people to be ‘reliable, respectable, and amiable’. A respondent from Russia outlined that as a result of *Shakespeare Lives*, their relationship with the British Council had grown. This meant that their opinion on British people and British businesses had not changed; it had proven them right to trust a British organisation in the first place.

More generally, some interviewees did offer reflections on their perceptions of British people. In the Horn of Africa, British people were compared with Americans, and were described as ‘more refined’, whereas in China they were quoted as being ‘old fashioned’, and ‘worthy of respect’ in Russia. The Chinese media went one step further, comparing Hallé’s music to the British psyche, claiming that

‘Hallé’s music has some very British characteristics; the music has a gloomy, introverted side’.

Respondents to the survey were also asked to rank a series of UK tourism destinations from their favourite to their least favourite, on the basis of which they would most like to visit. In VisitBritain’s 2014 publication, *Russia Market and Trade Profile*, the most sought-after activities for Russians to carry out in Britain were as follows: 54% of Russians opted for a tour around Buckingham Palace; 48% for a tour of the castles of Wales; 41% for seeing a sunrise at Stonehenge, etc.; 11-12% for seeing a Shakespeare play at London’s Globe Theatre. This was also echoed by findings of our survey across the three regions, which placed Buckingham Palace as the most popular, with Edinburgh Castle and the Scottish Highlands also significant favourites. However, Stratford-Upon-Avon and the London Globe did significantly better in the *Shakespeare Lives*

survey, both in the top 6 of the 12 destinations listed. Less popular destinations as outlined by *Shakespeare Lives* survey respondents were things like the London Eye, shopping in London’s Oxford Street and taking the mountain train up Snowdon. On the whole, this group of stakeholders seemed inclined towards cultural and heritage destinations.

4.2 Media perceptions

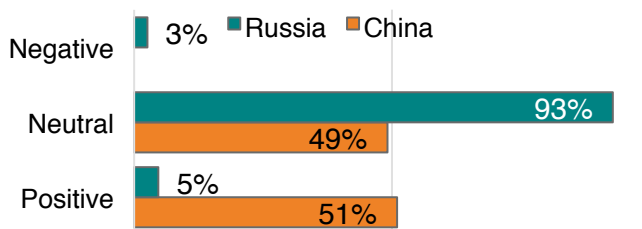
In order to permit some judgment regarding the likelihood of coverage of *Shakespeare Lives* having improved, or positively reinforced, media perceptions of the UK, the analysis of Chinese and Russian media coverage included variables to determine both the attitude taken to the UK and the centrality of the UK within each article. Of the 10 themes that were used to code articles in the media sample, five pertained directly to the UK and therefore had some potential to demonstrate how the UK was portrayed and perceived within media coverage of the *Shakespeare Lives* Programme.¹⁵ In addition to attitudinal coding for the main theme of each article, the analysis of media coverage also employed a separate and dedicated variable for capturing the attitude of the article to the UK in general (see Appendix C).

The collated media sample was analysed for the different themes which emerged in the articles (see Appendix C for the full list of themes as captured in the coding book). In China, *Shakespeare Lives* events/Programme were presented as the theme of 80% of articles; in Russia this was 43%, though the initiative remained the most frequently-referenced theme in the Russian media.

Attitudes towards themes in China were mainly positive (67%), whereas 80% of articles demonstrating attitudes to themes in the Russian media were neutral. The theme of UK culture and the arts was referenced only in relation to other events in China. In some cases, these articles provided an overview of the *Shakespeare Lives* Programme, in other cases,

they referred to events such as Mix the Play in Russia, which were not included on the study team’s original list of events. These articles may have provided an overview of the *Shakespeare Lives* Programme and therefore included background information on the UK arts scenes. In Russia, for instance, the Tretyakov exhibition garnered nearly all press articles touching on what has been coded, thematically, as ‘UK physical heritage’.

Figure 8. Attitudes towards the UK in the Chinese and Russian media



Perhaps the most notable difference between the two countries is clearest in their respective press’ attitude towards the UK. In China, half of all articles referenced it positively, whereas only a minority of Russia articles held the same attitude, instead being more likely to present a neutral attitude towards the UK.

Perhaps surprisingly, given the event’s focus and its hosting body, the British Embassy Open Day in China presented attitudes to the UK neutrally, with only 20% of articles referencing the country positively. Otherwise, Chinese media referenced attitudes towards the UK in events such as at SDAC (Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre) predominantly neutrally, even on occasion as entirely positively, such as in the case of the stakeholder reception and special screening of Macbeth. In Russia, the exhibition at Domodedovo, the Interactive Literature Map, and the New British Film Festival were all presented as having neutral attitudes towards the UK. Notable variations within individual events in terms of the attitude towards the UK include articles on the Tretyakov exhibition, which garnered a lot of positive attitudes towards the UK. At the other end, McKellen’s Visit and Midsummer gained a small amount of

slightly negative press; in some cases this focused specifically on the individual artist and perceptions of his lifestyle. A very small number of negative articles were found in relation to the Moscow Metro train (relating to a technical problem with the train overheating). In addition, a small number of articles appear to have offered more generally unfavourable comparisons between Russia and the UK.

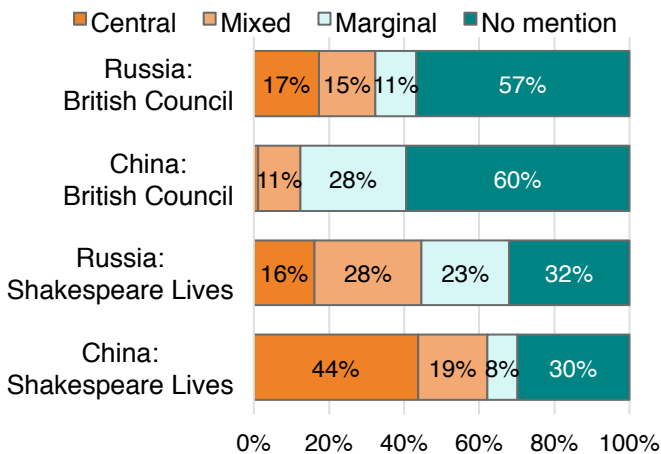
The media sample was analysed for the ‘centrality’ or emphasis on several key themes, with Shakespeare being central in 49% of all media in total across both countries (47% in China, 50% in Russia). Media coverage of *Shakespeare Lives* in the two countries was strikingly different in the degree to which it emphasised Shakespeare the British Council, the UK and the Programme itself - as shown in Figure 8 – with the British Council and the UK relatively more central to Russian coverage, for example, but with specific references to the *Shakespeare Lives* Programme being considerably more central to Chinese coverage.

Looking at some individual events, those such as the English Concert presenting a recital of Shakespeare-inspired/related music in China were reported with the UK as central to most articles (81%), the *Shakespeare Lives* Programme particularly mixed (97%) and the British Council never mentioned in a dominant capacity. Media on the Tretyakov exhibition presented the UK as central in most articles (82%). Some events did seem to reflect stronger branding or associations with the British Council: for example, the Arzamas events received more mentions/centrality of the British Council (56% of articles), but *Shakespeare Lives* as a programme does not figure centrally in coverage of these two related activities.

Where possible, analysis of articles sought to reflect whether mentions of themes placed the theme as ‘central’ to the article, or ‘mixed’ (i.e. mentioned on more than one occasion, but not a main theme). In Russia, the UK was presented in relation to McKellen’s Visit as mixed, with 56% of articles reporting on the UK in this

manner, and only 9% of articles on the event presented the UK as central.

Figure 9. Centrality of *Shakespeare Lives* and British Council in Chinese and Russian media



Midsummer, however, was more evenly spread, the UK appearing as central in 25% of articles, and as mixed in one third. This varying representation of the UK was also demonstrated by articles on China’s Shakespeare on Film, in which 72% of articles mentioned the UK marginally, and 23% held a mixed centrality of the UK. With regards to the Metro projects, in Russia the UK appeared as central to one third of articles. In China, however, the UK only either appeared as marginal (33%) or mixed (67%), with Russia overall providing more UK centrality in articles on the Moscow Metro, with 34% of media placing the UK as dominant.

Unlike in China, where Shakespeare was central to only 24% of articles related to Shakespeare on Film, in Russia’s McKellen Visit, Shakespeare was central in 50% of articles, and in 57% of articles on Midsummer. This is perhaps unsurprising, taking into account one article on Loud Allowed, in which its director alluded to the Bard’s popularity in the country:

‘Works of classic British literature are popular here. In Russia, Shakespeare’s works are read aloud best of all’.

However, in 100% of articles on Shakespeare on the Shanghai Metro Shakespeare was central, whereas this was presented as only 51% in relation to articles on Moscow Metro Shakespeare. Nonetheless, Shakespeare’s eternal nature was underlined by one Russia article, in which a stakeholder was quoted as saying,

‘As long as there are people on Earth, Shakespeare will also live.’

Across both countries, the British Council was frequently not centrally positioned with regards to these events. 47% of articles on McKellen’s Visit and 41 % of articles on Midsummer in Russia did not mention the British Council. In the Chinese media on Shakespeare on Film, 31% of articles did not mention the British Council, and 62 % referenced the institution marginally. This is also evident in the case of the Moscow and Shanghai metro projects; in the Russian media, the British Council received no mention in 63 % of articles, and was represented marginally in the Chinese media in 100 % of the media.

Articles on Shakespeare on Film (China) with Ian McKellen presented *Shakespeare Lives* as central in 59% of cases, and in 100% of articles on the Shakespeare Shanghai Metro. In Russia, however, *Shakespeare Lives* was presented as central in 32% of media on McKellen’s visit, and in 35% of media on Midsummer, with only 13% of media on the Shakespeare Moscow Metro presenting the *Shakespeare Lives* Programme as central.

Overall, there are similarities between China and Russia’s media in this context, above all considering the presentation of the British Council in the media in question, it being frequently overlooked in favour of *Shakespeare Lives*, and the comparable centrality of Shakespeare. However, nuanced yet significant differences are also manifest concerning the prominence of *Shakespeare Lives*, which is more visible in China, and the UK, which has more exposure in the Russian media.

5. Conclusions

In this study, we have focused on the *Shakespeare Lives* Programme across two countries and one region (China, Russia and the Horn of Africa), looked at stakeholders, including students, tourists and businesses sectors, and sought to explore different responses to and impacts of that Programme. The key question for this study was to evaluate the impact of *Shakespeare Lives* on the perceptions of the UK and trust. This has been explored through surveying and interviewing stakeholders who had some direct involvement with individual projects, events or the wider Programme, and with collating and analysing the media coverage of the Programme, where available. To give these findings some context, we have also – where appropriate – sought comparisons with existing data on trust in the people of the UK.

5.1 Key findings

Shakespeare has proved a useful connecting ground for the UK to engage with institutions, communities and individuals across the three areas. His work is liked and considered relevant by stakeholders, though understanding his work is still considered a challenge for some. Media coverage suggests that Shakespeare is still commonly recognised and understood currency, a figure who does not require introduction and whose works transcend cultures through a focus on the human condition. Furthermore, Shakespeare is viewed across the three regions as having enduring relevance: other than being understood as key to associations with the UK, the report finds that Shakespeare is used successfully as a touchstone to link strong UK heritage and contemporary cultural practice to discussions concerning present-day society, culture, and education. This is evident through the ways in which Shakespeare’s work is referenced both in the media in question, as well as by stakeholders.

The *Shakespeare Lives* Programme includes a wide variety of different types of events. As might be expected, these activities led to stakeholders engaging in a range of different ways, demonstrating different capacities or depths of engagement with the Programme and/or individual projects and events. Similarly, this variety is reflected in the media coverage, which tended mostly to be driven by a specific event. There is also some evidence that stakeholders’ feelings about the Programme and their broader perceptions of the UK are, to some extent, shaped by the type and depth of engagement. For example, stakeholders who had been involved in the creation and distribution of an event – ‘high’ engagers, as we have termed them, were more likely to indicate that they liked and/or understood Shakespeare. Overall, stakeholders who engaged with the Programme at large (were involved with more than one event) were found to be marginally to give accounts on any positive impacts of the Programme along with favourable outlooks of the UK than stakeholders who engaged only with specific events.

Nonetheless, it is clear that individual *Shakespeare Lives* events contributed to opening conversations concerning the UK, heritage and contemporary culture both in the media analysed as well as on individual stakeholder levels, no matter the degree of engagement.

The media coverage also varies in style and emphasis according to the event. Whilst some stakeholders engaged with several events – and a small percentage of media coverage referred more widely to the Programme –, the majority of our findings reflect responses to individual events and projects rather than a wider or cumulative effect across the Programme. Coverage from China was often duplicated across several outlets, and tended towards a

very factual style of reporting, for example. On the whole, particular events or even particular artists/celebrities (for example, Ian McKellen) were key drivers for coverage, whereas the Russian media prioritised stakeholders who were more associated with cultural institutions (for example, Michael Bird or the curator at the Tretyakov gallery). In the case of McKellen, the involvement of this artist brought significant profile to specific *Shakespeare Lives* events. However, the very small amount of negative press coverage in our sample tended to focus on the artist's lifestyle.

In addition to events which were not supported by celebrities or those high up in the cultural sector, arts activities open to the public and, to a lesser extent, education activities attracted coverage; however (generally) other types of activities did not, such as tourism events, which were effectively 'private' events. The *Shakespeare Lives* Programme itself gained some profile in the media. Although the *Shakespeare Lives* programme gained some profile in the media, the British Council was mentioned comparatively little, frequently providing the Programme with additional background or, on occasion, it was presented as a collaborator.

Collaboration between UK cultural institutions or artists and in-country institutions and artists is reflected in the media coverage of particular projects, as is the role of the British Council as a collaborator. Less common were references to collaborations within the regions, or indeed collaborations across different sectors. On the whole, stakeholders report a positive impact from the *Shakespeare Lives* Programme on their opportunity to meet British people (presumably through collaborations with UK institutions and artists, again positioning Shakespeare as a connecting ground in the three regions). Positive impressions were also expressed in relation to collaborations with other arts organisations, the potential for new cultural partners and new collaborations as a result of the Programme. Stakeholder interviews reflect the value of these

in-person engagements between collaborators from the UK and the different areas: the UK's credibility in the context of collaboration was underlined by some interview respondents who documented opportunities to learn about the UK through international partnerships (in the Horn of Africa especially). Media coverage of activities also highlighted new types of partnerships/connections, as is the case in China in particular. Some stakeholders also report positive benefits in terms of opportunities to engage with more business in the UK, or potential new business partners.

There is evidence of positive impacts for stakeholders as a result of their engagement. They most frequently felt they had learnt something new about Shakespeare (this was also the most frequently forecasted impact in the media coverage) and often, by extension, about the UK. Stakeholders felt more positive towards Shakespeare; and most respondents also felt that the Programme had some impact upon their arts participation. Media coverage (particularly in Russia) also focused upon the range of new activities/productions/material which was made available/presented through the Programme. In the case of the Horn of Africa, respondents felt that they had gained new knowledge of the UK, rather than being exposed to USA heritage and culture which is the Anglophone country to which the region is most often exposed. They had therefore been able to consider the UK as a study destination for the first time.

In terms of their broader perspectives on the UK, stakeholders felt that their knowledge of the UK and of the English language had also been impacted by the Programme. For particular events, some media coverage also reflects the sense of increased/improved knowledge of the UK.

Overall, stakeholders have a fondness towards the UK, and seem to reflect the positive relationship between engagement in cultural relations with the UK and trust in people of the UK which other British Council research has

demonstrated. For some stakeholders, the opportunity to work with organisations and individuals from the UK was important in confirming this trust. More generally, stakeholders were positive about the arts scene in the UK, about wanting to visit the UK and about the welcome people in the UK might give them. Media perceptions of the UK were more spread, with some coverage simply being more neutral in its approach. Only a very small proportion of coverage was negative in any way, and related to very specific things.

5.2 Areas to explore further

This study begins to identify what feel like important cultural differences in the reception of the *Shakespeare Lives* Programme, particularly between Russia and China where we have the most data. They have different literary and cultural heritage of their own; and also different attitudes towards expression in the press. We should also acknowledge the potential strain of current diplomatic and other relations with Russia, as well as important contextual activities such as China's Year of Cultural Exchange with the UK which took place in 2015, finishing just as *Shakespeare Lives* began. In terms of exploring and understanding the potential for cultural relations to build trust, these differences are crucial.

One of the challenges for the study was seeking to reach a range of different stakeholders for the survey and interviews, and understanding how diverse or representative of different types of engagement that stakeholder group was. The majority of respondents seem to have been those who participated and/or helped to deliver projects, and is focused predominantly around those who engaged with arts projects as far as we are able to ascertain. There are some respondents from education and who engaged in education-focused projects, and a smaller number of respondents from the tourism sector, and who we think engaged in tourism-related activities. As such, the sample is not large enough, nor do we know enough about it, to

allow us to do more granular comparison between sub-groups of stakeholders which might enable us to better understand the relationships and comparisons between different types of engagement, from different types of stakeholders. It would be valuable to consider how a better sample might be gained in any future work, to support a more in-depth study of these differences.

The current study also lacks any longitudinal element: we have needed to ask stakeholders to project what they feel outcomes may be in the future, and what their immediate short-term responses to the Programme are. The baseline data available to provide any typical comparison to our stakeholders is also limited. In simple terms, we have no 'before' and 'after' to compare; nor do we have substantial proxy data from an unengaged or partially engaged population in all those countries against which to understand the new or additional engagement with *Shakespeare Lives* offers. It would be very useful to return to the stakeholders further down the line, to understand whether collaborations emerged, what plans individuals made, and whether institutions and organisations have altered their views and behaviour.

Finally, the findings in this report reveal some useful differences about the way in which stakeholders and the media perceive the organisation of cultural relations like this Programme. It would be useful to explore whether the awareness of the broader Programme, and of the British Council as a key actor and collaborator, are important for stakeholders and in the press after the Programme has finished.

Endnotes

¹ In this study, *Shakespeare Lives* and 'Programme' are used interchangeably.

² We were originally asked to study the Horn of Africa including Ethiopia, South Sudan and Sudan. However, the ongoing political situation in South Sudan has had an impact on the country's capacity to engage with new / international cultural activity. As far as this study is aware, *Shakespeare Lives* activities only took place in Sudan and Ethiopia and, as such, Horn of Africa respondents to the present study come from these two countries exclusively.

³ This was noticeably the case for the Tretyakov exhibition in Russia.

⁴ The Institute of Cultural Capital is contracted to produce a follow-up, legacy report, gathering relevant complementary data throughout 2017 that can be summarised and disseminated early in 2018.

⁵ *All the World's* (British Council: 2016)

⁶ *Trust Pays* (British Council: 2012)

⁷ With regards to the the Chinese media sampling, it is worth noting, however, that there were many duplicate articles, as well as a considerable number of faulty or no longer functioning URLs.

⁸ For more information, see <https://www.shakespearelives.org/programme/>

⁹ Those surveyed were asked to indicate how they were involved with *Shakespeare Lives* (see Appendix B). For the purposes of better understanding the relationship between the depth of engagement and the responses to other survey questions, we subsequently categorised each respondent's engagement with the Programme as either 'high' or 'low'. 'Low' engagement is attributed to those respondents who reported having attended or participated in one event, or having reviewed one or more events, and 'high' engagement is attributed to those respondents who reported having participated in a more intensive manner (e.g. through participation or attendance at multiple events, or in contributing to the organisation and delivery of an event).

¹⁰ *All the World's* (2016). The figures quoted here relate to the 68% of respondents who had experienced Shakespeare's work in the 2016 report. Additionally, 53% of this subset agreed that they understood Shakespeare's work.

¹¹ It is important to take into account, however, the relatively small number of responses received from the Horn of Africa. Due to this, it would be imprudent to use these figures as the basis for broader statistical inferences or hypotheses.

¹² Among those classified as having had a 'high' degree of involvement with *Shakespeare Lives* ($n = 42$), 95% stated that they liked Shakespeare, with

79% stating that they understood Shakespeare.

Among those classified as having had a 'low' degree of involvement with *Shakespeare Lives* ($n = 31$), the respective figures were 90% and 65%.

¹³ 'Engaging with new materials' includes, for instance, going to see a play, reading or screening not previously performed in the country.

¹⁴ These were with respect to whether the UK has 'creative and innovative arts'; whether 'people from the UK are open and welcoming'; whether 'people from the UK can be trusted'; and whether the respondent wanted 'to study at a UK institution'.

¹⁵ These five codes were 'UK physical heritage', 'UK culture and arts', 'UK contemporary culture, creative industries and arts organisations', 'UK life and people', and 'Study in the UK'; although 'Study in the UK' did not appear as the main theme of any of the articles coded.