

Research Review in Modern Languages

**presented by a review team led by the LLAS Subject Centre,
University of Southampton, in partnership with UCML**

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Executive summary

The aim of this research review is to gain a systematic understanding of the intellectual health of modern languages in the UK through the provision of a detailed picture of research patterns and developments. The resulting map of the intellectual landscape is intended to help the AHRC understand the wider research context within which it makes funding decisions.

Overall, the review concludes that research in Modern Languages is in remarkably good health. This is in contrast to the recent decline in secondary school language learning and undergraduate degrees in languages. On the contrary, the number of researchers has remained constant and the quality of their research is strikingly high.

Part one of the review sets out the strategic context and provides a map of research activity in modern languages. The number of staff researching in the subject has remained stable at around 2000, representing about one sixth of the arts and humanities research community. Most of them combine research with teaching. They are predominantly white, with a significant number of non-UK nationals. A small majority are men, though women are more numerous in the younger age range. Seventy percent are working in French, German and Spanish, though the proportion working in other languages is slowly increasing. The number of modern languages departments has declined significantly, and there is an increasing concentration in the pre-1992 sector, especially in Russell Group institutions. There are about 2,500 postgraduate research students, of whom around one third are studying part-time.

Core research funding is heavily focused in departments with the higher RAE rankings. Researchers with a humanities emphasis seek external research funding primarily to secure research time, while those using social science approaches are more inclined to undertake major projects involving team activities. One sixth of doctoral students are funded by research council awards, and modern languages have a good success rate in doctoral applications to the AHRC.

Part two examines the changes which have taken place in the focus of research. It notes that the decline in undergraduate numbers has an impact on the pool of potential researchers. There is some risk that expertise in the linguistics of modern languages is being lost, though applied language research is gaining a higher profile, with a noticeable increase in intercultural communication, translation and interpreting studies, and modern languages pedagogy. Literature teaching is being displaced in school and university curricula, and although literature remains much the largest area of AHRC-funded research, the balance is shifting towards popular culture, language and history, while cinema studies, politics and philosophy are growing fields of interest. Early career researchers are increasingly turning to cultural studies and social-historical approaches which have had a major impact on the discipline. There has been a growth of research links with social science disciplines, though the numbers of history specialists in modern languages are apparently declining. Gender studies and post-colonial studies remain an important focus.

The shift towards research into twentieth century and contemporary topics has accelerated in recent years. Medieval and 19th century studies remain relatively buoyant, assisted by the availability of ICT approaches. But while there is high quality work in the 'cinderella centuries' between those periods, this area of research is in imminent risk of disappearing. These shifts have important consequences both in raising the need for

additional resources for the newer areas and in leading to under-use of library and archive holdings in traditionally strong areas.

Disciplinary shifts are having a major impact in generating new research objects and themes, including popular and mass cultural practices, transnational cinema and visual studies. They are reinvigorating some older topics, such as politics, history and society, which are increasingly embracing cultural dimensions. Similarly, language studies are using more ICT and applied linguistic approaches. The shifts are accelerating the decline of other topics, especially in respect of earlier centuries.

More systematic training has contributed to a stronger postgraduate research culture. These researchers are more theoretically aware, though likely to take an eclectic view of theory. Formalist literary analysis and traditional historical research are both less popular, and early career researchers are turning more frequently to social science paradigms. Though modern languages research is predominantly individual, there has been a growth in collaborative research, especially among younger researchers, though this is not evenly spread. It is often motivated by research that requires collaboration between disciplines. There are several barriers to interdisciplinarity, however, including the requirements of disciplinary undergraduate teaching, and the practicalities of RAE recognition. ICT has assisted the growth of collaboration, though it is less of a factor in the UK than in the US.

UK research in modern languages is internationally distinctive, bringing different approaches and drawing on different methodologies from other European or American scholars. Research is markedly comparative, more readily spans disciplinary borders and has a strongly empirical basis. UK modern languages cultural studies is world leading, and pockets of excellence exist in less popular areas. UK scholars are more inclined than others to collaborate with colleagues abroad and more inclined to publish work in foreign languages than their English-speaking counterparts.

Part three examines changes in the research base and identifies obstacles that prevent some modern languages researchers from applying for new funding opportunities. Research thrives in an environment where staff have time, a strong postgraduate community, post-doctoral assistants, support for travel and manageable teaching loads. Factors such as staff retirements have resulted in the loss of some research capacity. There have been significant falls in staffing in some traditional areas of research in modern languages, and some modern languages staff are being redeployed into other disciplines. However, UK modern languages departments are now increasingly employing postdoctoral staff. Researchers are adopting new approaches to research and research organisation, including ICT, project-based and interdisciplinary work, and the opportunity to manage a large grant via a small team of researchers. Obstacles still exist, such as the widening resource gap between pre- and post-1992 institutions. But a high level of RAE-awareness has led to a significant rise in the quality of research between 1996 and 2001.

Part four focuses on recent trends in dissemination. Institutional support has made a broadly positive contribution to the dissemination of modern languages research. Funding schemes provided by the AHRC have enabled staff to take time away from teaching to complete a significant project, such as a monograph. Staff are further encouraged by an active research environment provided by RAE benchmarks and by current academic appointment and promotion criteria, which emphasise the importance

of high quality research outputs. The publishing environment has changed to meet these needs. There is a growing number of UK-based journals covering modern languages research topics. These new journals tend to be concentrated on subjects within the contemporary period; reflecting changes in research focus. New UK journals also emphasise a cultural studies approach, and, through the proliferation of special issues, act as an alternative outlet for conference outcomes. The parallel increase in online journals and in other, non-traditional, forms of output has provided new avenues for discussion and eliminated the increasingly anachronistic delay between manuscript submission and publication.

Modern languages academics publish through both UK and non-UK publishers. Over the last five years there have been shifts in the type of publication that UK publishers have been willing to publish on behalf of modern languages academics. As a result of factors such as teaching needs and commercial interest, staff are still writing and publishing text books and translations, in spite of the disincentives provided by criteria for RAE submissions, AHRC grants and career progression. There has, however, been a decrease in the number of collaborative works being published, no doubt influenced by these same disincentives. With RAE benchmarks in mind, the number of monographs being published has increased, but this increase has only been possible due to significant changes in the types of publisher producing monographs. Large UK presses are publishing fewer monographs, and smaller, independent presses are publishing more. This latter type of press is more likely to ask for a subsidy to ease the financial burden of a limited print run. In the same period, there has been little or no expansion of modern languages publications by UK university presses, but more research is being published in other European countries. The use of foreign languages is often discouraged by UK publishers, again because of commercial factors, so modern languages academics are increasingly happy to take their work abroad.

Looking to the future, the principal route for knowledge transfer will continue to be through teaching and publication. Approaches using ICT methodologies and resources are likely to grow slowly in the absence of further substantial investment. Individual research will remain the dominant mode of research in modern languages, although collaborative projects will start to play a larger part. Modern languages research will be further concentrated in fewer universities, which will reduce diversity and innovation, but, conversely, will create a richer research environment in some institutions. The review concludes that modern languages will maintain its overall research capability.

PART ONE

Mapping research in modern languages

1.1 The strategic context

The aim of this research review is to gain a systematic understanding of the intellectual health of modern languages in the UK through the provision of a detailed picture of research patterns and developments. The resulting map of the intellectual landscape is intended to help the AHRC understand the wider research context within which it makes funding decisions.

The review maps current research in both quantitative and qualitative terms. This is taken to include research in all languages, other than the English, Celtic and Classical languages, and to include the linguistics of the languages concerned. It identifies the levels of research activity in terms of the numbers of researchers working or studying in UK universities, and the pattern of published outputs, over the period 2000-2005.

The evolving pattern of research is examined in respect of the particular languages and areas studied; the disciplinary focus in terms, for example, of language, literature, teaching and learning, history, culture and society; the objects of research, including, among others, literary and non-literary texts, audiovisual media and materials and popular cultural practices. The review examines methods of research, in terms of theoretical frameworks, methodologies, collaborative approaches and resources; the institutional location of research, and the different locations of particular types of research; and the demographic structure of researchers.

The review investigates the outlets for dissemination and publication, including trends in academic book publishing; and it assesses the character and extent of interdisciplinary activity, its effects on the evolution of disciplinary boundaries, and its implications for future research. The picture of research in UK modern languages is compared, where possible, with research in modern languages in other countries, especially the English speaking world and the rest of Europe. A firm view has emerged on where UK research is distinctive or different, and where it may be seen as leading internationally. The report identifies significant changes in the pattern of research, factors influencing change, and future directions that research is likely to take. It explores salient issues of concern for the development of the research community, especially in terms of capacity and capability, and it examines the impact of international research collaboration and intellectual exchange with research communities in the rest of Europe and the US.

A substantial body of evidence has been assembled to support the review findings. Quantitative evidence has been provided by the main public

agencies, especially the AHRC itself, RAE 2001 reports and HESA. It is noteworthy, however, that the RAE reports offer the most complete information base, but refer to the period 1996-2000. Other than RAE 2008, no arrangements are in place for monitoring detailed quantitative changes since then.

Qualitative evidence has been provided by a wide consultation process, which involved extensive discussions with a group of senior researchers nominated by subject associations in modern languages, a questionnaire enquiry directed at Heads of Department or their equivalent, and a structured survey of the concerns of rising researchers, using the DELPHI methodology for amplification of experts' opinions. In addition, members of the enquiry team have conducted a considerable number of individual interviews and discussions, and have harvested the views of a wide range of researchers in the subject area.

The review was conducted in the context of wider anxiety about the health of modern languages as a subject area. In higher education, the number of students taking languages to degree level has continued to decline, even if the number studying a language in elective courses have remained relatively buoyant. A significant number of institutions, perhaps as many as one third, have closed language departments over the past seven years (see 1.2). Many others have reduced their provision of language degrees, especially in post-1992 institutions. The impact of the decline on higher education was examined in the *Roberts Review into Strategic and Vulnerable Subjects* (HEFCE 2005), which identified modern foreign languages as being of strategic importance and vulnerable.

No formal recommendations are presented, since the findings are designed to inform the AHRC in the first instance, and to provide a basis on which the Research Council can develop its own strategic thinking. The review group believes that the information and analysis offered in the report will also be of significant interest to the academic community in modern languages, and will provide a basis on which subject associations and institutions can develop their own strategic views.

1.2 Academic staff and postgraduate students

Around 2000 academic staff are currently researching in modern languages.

The figure is difficult to specify with greater precision. For 2004-5, the AHRC estimated that there were 2208 research staff eligible to apply to its Panel 5 grouping, which includes all languages and linguistics. This figure is derived from HESA statistics. These statistics show that there were 2,779 full-time equivalent academic staff in modern languages in that year, including staff in fractional posts, of whom at least 781 were on non-research contracts. (Appendix B, table 2).

AHRC Panel	Research Active Staff	
	Number	% of Total
Classics, Ancient History and Archaeology	830	7%
Visual Arts and Media	2375	19%
English Language and Literature	1575	13%
Mediaeval and Modern History	1777	15%
Modern Languages and Linguistics	2208	18%
Librarianship, Archives and Information Science	302	2%
Music and Performing Arts	884	7%
Philosophy, Religious Studies and Law	2252	18%
Total	12,203	100%

AHRC working figures, 2004-05, 2208 research active staff in Panel 5

The figure is confirmed by data collected for RAE 2001, which suggests that around 1,800 staff were returned as research-active in modern languages. This figure includes all staff returned to the five panels concerned with single language groups, and an estimated proportion of those returned to five RAE panels that include researchers in both modern languages and other disciplines.

RAE Panel	(FTE) A/A* Staff	(FTE) Number of ML
Middle Eastern and African Studies	128.8	64.4
Asian Studies	129.5	64.75
European Studies	558.7	372.46
French	446	446
German, Dutch and Scandinavian Languages	254.9	254.9
Italian	103.4	103.4
Russian, Slavonic and East European Languages	77.3	77.3
Iberian and Latin American Languages	207.5	207.5
Linguistics	210.3	42.06
Education	2045.1	204.5
Totals across all panels	4161.5	1837.27

RAE 2001 figures, total number of staff (FTE) per panel, and estimated proportion thought to be researching in modern languages.

Modern languages represent about a sixth of staff in the arts and humanities area.

According to AHRC working figures, staff in languages and linguistics together (the constituency for Panel 5) make up 18% of staff in the area. Of the other panels, only the Visual Arts and Media panel has a slightly larger constituency (19%).

The three largest languages account for around 70% of research staff.

The figure is based on HESA data from 2000-4, when data on French, German and Spanish were identified separately from other languages. The trend over this period was for other languages to increase as a proportion of the total number in modern languages, from 26% to 31%. The datasets are no longer separately identified.

	2000/1	2001/2	2002/3		2003/4	2004/5
Staff FTE	2,257	2,306	2,311		2,596	2,779
- French, German, Spanish	1,617	1628	1630		1804	<i>Breakdown no longer available</i>
- Other Languages	640	678	681		792	

HESA statistics, Trends in Academic staff FTE for Modern Languages only, 2000/1 to 2004/5 (Appendix A)

The number of research staff has probably remained stable.

Precise figures are not available. The total number of academic staff in modern languages (teaching and research) has grown steadily over the past five years. In the three years 2000-3, total numbers of staff grew by 2.3%. HESA's method of recording then changed, and the numbers for 2004-5 show a 6.6% increase on the previous year. In view of the recent expansion of language provision for non-linguists, it is likely that some and perhaps most of the growth has been in the area of specialist language teaching rather than the area of research.

Most research is carried out by academic staff who also teach.

In 2004-5, research-only staff accounted for 3.4% of the total staff FTE count in modern languages. (Appendix B, table 2) The remaining research staff comprise professors (11%), senior lecturers and readers (20%), and lecturers (36%). Staff who undertake research comprise roughly three-quarters of the total staff in modern languages in FTE terms.

Academic staff		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Professors	306	11.0
	Senior Lecturers & Researchers	560	20.2
	Lecturers	1008	36.3
	Researchers	94	3.4
	Other Grades	654	23.5
	Total	2624	94.4
	Unknown	155	5.6
Total		2779	100.0

HESA statistics, total staff FTE by grade, 2004-05 (Appendix B)

The ethnic profile of staff is mainly white, with a large minority of non-UK nationals.

Around 4% are from Black or Asian backgrounds, with a further 4% from mixed backgrounds. (Appendix B, table 6) Some 37% of all modern languages staff are not UK nationals. They come from around 70 different countries, with a preponderance of staff from other European countries, especially from France (7.4%), Germany (6.7%), Spain (5.5), Italy (3.6%). (Appendix B, table 10). In view of the expansion in language teaching provision, it is likely that non-UK staff are more strongly represented in teaching-only roles than in pursuing research.

A small majority of research active staff are male.

Although 56% of all modern languages staff are female, it appears that women are more strongly represented in teaching-only roles. The AHRC's figures for research active staff show that, in both FTE and headcount, 45% of staff are female, with 55% male. The proportions vary between subject

areas, but Linguistics is the only area in which female researchers are in the majority. (Appendix C)

The age profile of staff is balanced.

The mean age of all staff in languages is 44. Eighty-four per cent are aged 31-60, showing an even spread across this thirty year career range. There are roughly 13% in each five year group, apart from those aged 35-40, who account for 17%. Only 5% of staff are over 60 and 10% are 30 or younger (Appendix C)

Women predominate in younger age groups, men predominate among older researchers.

Figures suggest that there has been an increasing involvement of women in academic research. Women are in a clear majority in the younger age cohorts, accounting for 61% of staff under 30 years old. They are roughly equal in numbers at age 41-45. Thereafter, male researchers are increasingly in the majority, representing 65% of those aged 56-60, and three quarters of the much smaller cohort aged over 60 (Appendix C)

There are significant regional differences in the distribution of staff.

Around 40% of staff are concentrated in London and the South East. There are significant clusters in the North West (12%) and in Yorkshire and Humberside (11%). Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have around 3% each. (Appendix B, table 8)

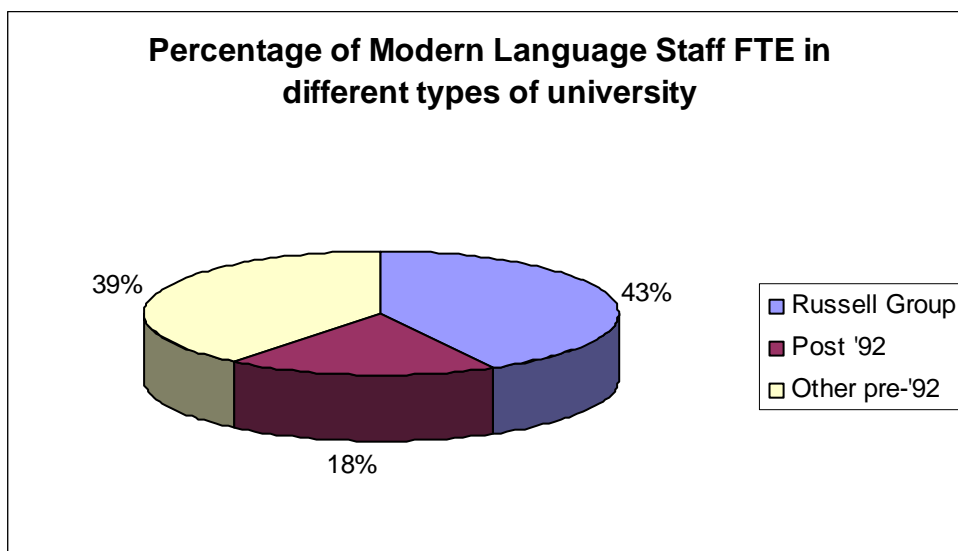
Fewer institutions are active in languages.

Modern languages are taught in 94 institutions in the UK, though only 82 of these offer any language to degree level, which represents the principal base for modern languages research. The change over seven years is shown in the UCAS listings of degree courses available. For entry 2007, UCAS listed 82 institutions which offered French as a major or minor part of a degree, 70 offered Spanish, 65 offered German, 37 Italian, 16 Russian and 15 Japanese. This compares with entry 2000 in which 126 institutions offered degrees involving either French or German, usually both. Spanish (106) Italian (66) Russian (48) and Japanese (31) were also strongly represented. Comparing the figures for 2000 and 2007, it appears that the number of institutions offering major or minor degrees in modern languages has fallen by around one third in French and Spanish, by around a half in German, Italian and Japanese, and by two thirds in Russian.

Language	Degrees in 2000	Degrees in 2007	Percentage change %
French	126	82	-35%
German	126	65	-48%
Spanish	106	70	-34%
Italian	66	37	-44%
Russian	48	16	-67%
Japanese	31	15	-52%

Research staff are concentrated in pre-1992 universities, especially in the Russell Group.

The post-1992 sector accounts for 18% of all staff in modern languages. The pre-1992 sector therefore accounts for 82% of staff, of whom more than half are located in the 15 Russell Group universities that offer languages. Leeds (5.4%), Oxford (5.2%) and University College London (5.0%) are the largest institutions for languages in staff terms. A further 12 institutions account for at least 2% each (representing 57 staff FTE or more), of which Westminster (2.7%) is the only post-1992 university. There is a marked concentration in the Russell Group, where each institution has on average 78 FTE staff in languages, compared with an average of 24 FTE staff in other pre-1992 universities and 15 FTE staff in post-1992 institutions. These figures relate to all staff in modern languages, including language tutors. RAE 2001 data suggest that the proportion of those staff that are research-active is lower in post-1992 universities. (Appendix B, table 13)



HESA statistics, total staff FTE by university type (Appendix B, table 13)

There are roughly 2,500 research students (PGR) in modern languages.

The figures are difficult to assign with precision. RAE 2001 showed roughly 2150 postgraduate research students assignable to modern languages (1800 FTE). This is around 1.0 PGR student per member of staff returned, and compares with History, for example, which has 1.08 per member of staff. HESA data showed a constant level of around 2400 registered PGR students during the period 1998-2002. The method of recording has since changed, and the number shown for 2003-4 is over 2500, significantly higher than the previous year. (Appendix D)

One third of research students are studying part-time.

On average across all institutions, 35% of research students in languages are studying part-time, though the proportion varies considerably, ranging from 17% in Asian studies to almost 50% in Iberian and Latin American studies.

RAE Panel	full time	part time	total	total FTE
Middle Eastern and African Studies	196.23	46	242.23	219.23
Asian Studies	142.93	29.5	172.43	159.78
European Studies	210.9	144.55	355.45	284.74
French	222.75	115.5	338.25	285.62
German, Dutch and Scandinavian Languages	138.25	77.5	215.75	179.83
Italian	60	48.5	108.5	83.84
Russian, Slavonic and East European Languages	39.16	21.5	60.66	50.01
Iberian and Latin American Languages	100.5	98	198.5	151.85
Linguistics	278.25	179.5	457.75	364.6
Totals across all panels	1388.97	760.55	2149.52	1779.5

RAE 2001 statistics, research students by RAE panel, 2000

1.3 Funding of research

Core research funding is focused on the highest RAE ranked departments.

Core funding for research is mainly allocated according to a formula which takes account of the grades achieved by departments in RAE (QR). The formula differs between funding councils, and while HEFCE makes an explicit QR allocation, this is not the case in Scotland. The aim of the funding formula is to provide greater support for the higher graded units. The application of this principle by HEFCE, affecting 90% of languages research staff in the UK, has been increasingly designed to direct QR funding towards the highest graded units (5 and 5*). The precise levels of funding vary from one RAE panel to another, and modern language research is considered by at least ten panels. However, a similar pattern applies to each panel, and can be

expressed in a rough average. On this basis in England in 2001, the five highest grades (3b, 3a, 4, 5, 5*) were funded on a rising scale from £5,000 to £20,000 per member of staff returned. In 2005, QR funding in England was confined to the three highest grades (4, 5, 5*), which received respectively £8,000, £26,000 and £32,000 per staff member. The corresponding amounts in Wales are up to £14,000 for grade 4, up to £23,000 for grade 5 and in Scotland £12,000 for grade 4, £24,000 for grade 5 and £27,000 for grade 5*.

Year	QR rates (£) for England				
	3b	3a	4	5	5*
2001	5,000	7,000	11,000	17,000	20,000
2005	0	0	8,000	26,000	32,000

HEFCE funding rates for QR in England, 2001 and 2005

Researchers based in the humanities seek funding mainly for research time.

RAE 2001 profiles indicate that modern languages scholars working in humanities areas (literature, film, critical theory, cultural studies, intellectual history) apply for and receive relatively modest sums from research funding bodies. Their main relationships are with AHRC, British Academy and Leverhulme, and their applications are principally aimed at freeing their own time for research. In 2004-05 nearly twice as many research active modern languages staff applied for AHRC Research Leave awards as applied for Research Grants.

AHRC Panel	Research Active Staff		All Applications	
	Number	% of Total	% of staff applying	% of staff receiving awards
Classics, Ancient History and Archaeology	830	7%	6.0%	4.3%
Visual Arts and Media	2375	19%	4.0%	2.3%
English Language and Literature	1575	13%	7.9%	3.3%
Mediaeval and Modern History	1777	15%	9.6%	3.2%
Modern Languages and Linguistics	2208	18%	5.8%	2.3%
Librarianship, Archives and Information Science	302	2%	1.6%	0.0%
Music and Performing Arts	884	7%	6.0%	4.4%
Philosophy, Religious Studies and Law	2252	18%	5.2%	3.0%
Total	12,203	100%		

AHRC Research Leave applications, 2004/05

AHRC Panel	Research Active Staff		All Applications	
	Number	% of Total	% of staff applying	% of staff receiving awards
Classics, Ancient History and Archaeology	830	7%	9.3%	1.4%
Visual Arts and Media	2375	19%	6.4%	1.0%
English Language and Literature	1575	13%	2.4%	0.7%
Mediaeval and Modern History	1777	15%	6.3%	1.2%
Modern Languages and Linguistics	2208	18%	3.2%	0.7%
Librarianship, Archives and Information Science	302	2%	15.2%	2.0%
Music and Performing Arts	884	7%	6.0%	1.1%
Philosophy, Religious Studies and Law	2252	18%	3.0%	0.6%
Total	12,203	100%		

AHRC Research Grant and Resource Enhancement applications, 2004/05

Researchers based in the social sciences seek more funding for research projects.

Based on the RAE 2001 profiles, modern languages scholars working in social sciences areas (around 22% of the total; working in applied linguistics, education, social and political studies) receive significantly more funding from research funding bodies. Although they seek funding from AHRC, British Academy and Leverhulme, they also apply to the ESRC and to the European Framework Programmes, among other sources. Their awards typically involve employing a small team of postgraduate and postdoctoral research assistants to work on larger scale collaborative projects (Appendix G)

One doctoral student in six is funded by a research council grant.

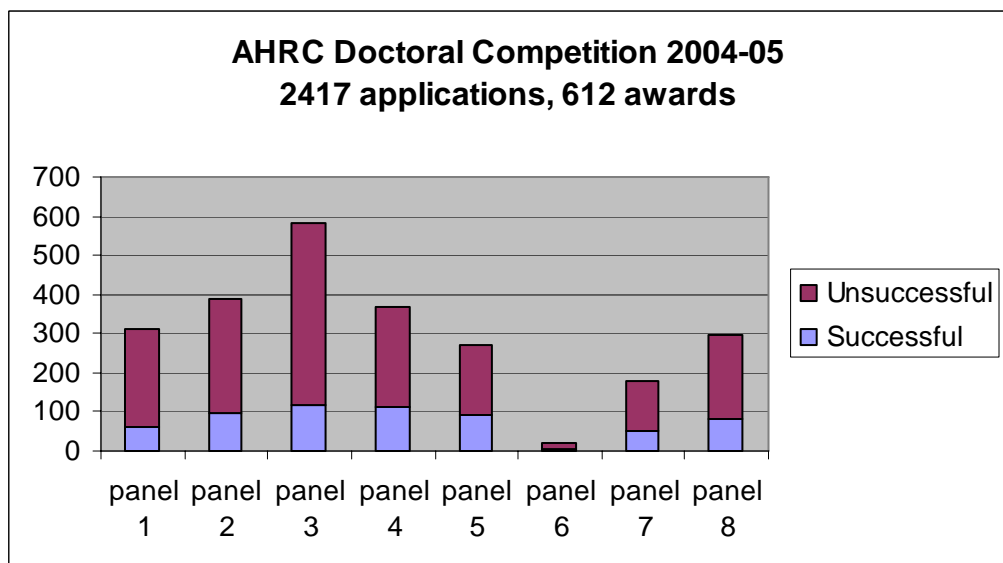
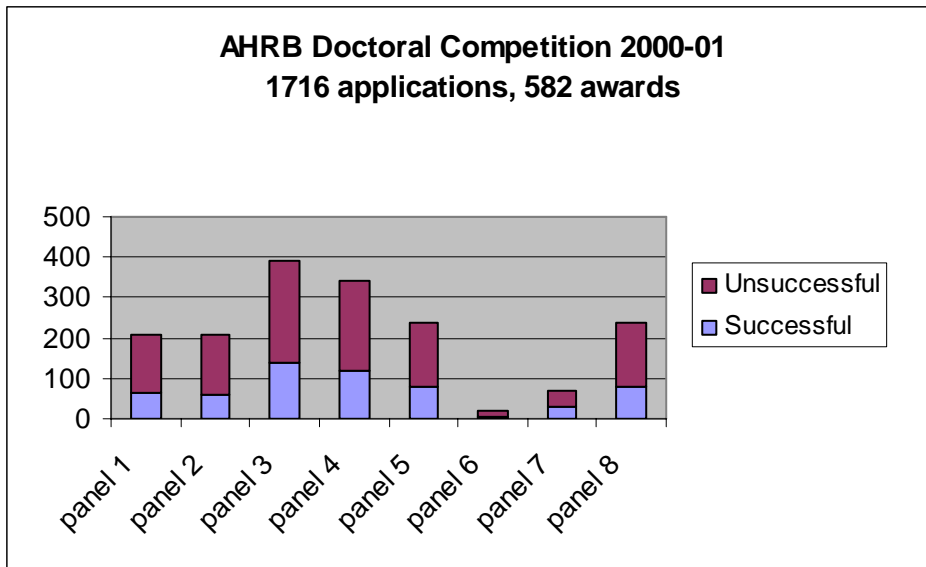
In 2000, around 300 out of nearly 1800 FTE research students returned in modern languages and linguistics were funded by the AHRB or another OST research council. The number varied considerably between subject areas, from 5% in European Studies to 30% in French and German. Statistics on the precise pattern of funding for the remaining students are not available. Some universities offer their own studentships and postgraduate teaching assistantships. There are diverse other sources of funding nationally and internationally. However, it appears likely that the majority of postgraduate research students were, and still are, self-financing. (Appendix I)

RAE Panel	Total FTE	AHRB/ OST	% Proportion of FTE
Middle Eastern and African Studies	219.23	20.64	9.41%
Asian Studies	159.78	15.39	9.63%
European Studies	284.74	15	5.27%
French	285.62	87	30.46%
German, Dutch and Scandinavian Languages	179.83	54	30.03%
Italian	83.84	18	21.46%
Russian, Slavonic and East European Languages	50.01	9	18.00%
Iberian and Latin American Languages	151.85	19.5	12.84%
Linguistics	364.6	64.5	17.69%
Totals across all panels	1779.5	303.03	17.03%

RAE 2001, postgraduate research studentships in 2000

Languages applicants have a good success rate in obtaining AHRC doctoral awards.

Students in Languages and Linguistics make fewer applications in the AHRC doctoral competition than English or History, but have recently achieved a better success rate. This is a highly competitive scheme in which one third of all candidates were successful in 2000-1 but only a quarter were successful in 2004-5. Modern Languages secured a 33% success rate in the most recent year, the highest of any subject group.



PART TWO

Research focus

Important changes are taking place in modern languages research in its disciplinary range, the methods it adopts, and the themes and objects it addresses. Some of these changes are quite recent: intercultural communications has established itself as a research area in the last five years, for example. Others, such as the embedding of interdisciplinary research, have been in progress for several decades. These changes are linked to a wide range of factors, some national in their origin and impact, others international: curriculum shifts in secondary schools, for example; political and other changes in the countries where modern languages are spoken; external funding opportunities; the professionalisation of postgraduate training; the rise of ICT; and the promotion of collaborative and interdisciplinary research.

2.1 Changes in disciplinary focus

Changes in secondary schools are reducing the pool of potential modern languages students.

Student demand is a key driver of change in Higher Education and tends to reflect experience in secondary schools. Advanced language learning has come to seem more challenging and less attractive to many students. In part this reflects competition from other subjects, but it also stems from aspects of school curricula, which among other things have reduced the time spent studying the structure of language. The result has been falling 'A' level numbers in three of the four most widely-taught languages.

Language/ Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
French	18,228	17,939	15,615	15,554	15,173
German	8,694	8,446	7,013	6,973	6,413
Spanish	5,636	5,530	5,573	5,896	6,333
Italian	908	869	787	846	813

CILT, A-level exam entry figures, 2000 – 2004

The closure or restructuring of university modern languages departments affected by these changes is transforming the institutional contexts in which research is undertaken.

Modern languages linguistics expertise is under threat.

Around one sixth of AHRC Research Grant and Leave applications by modern languages staff currently centre on language-related modern languages projects. Despite this, linguistics expertise is being lost from modern languages departments. In some cases, especially where staffing is contracting, specialists are migrating to general linguistics departments. In such cases, even where modern languages researchers can continue to draw on their ex-colleagues' expertise, the risk remains of progressive deskilling in an area of traditional UK research strength and distinctiveness.

'We seem to be losing our language specialists.
We need more discourse analysis: it's the basis of
close textual work and we can't afford to lose it'

(Professor of Spanish)

Applied language research, once largely the preserve of post-92 and non-traditional institutions, is beginning to find a higher profile.

Research on modern languages-related pedagogy has traditionally been undertaken across languages, and supported by HEIs under their Teaching and Learning agendas. It has been difficult to place in the RAE panel framework and has been conducted chiefly in post-1992 institutions, often with a strong ICT dimension. Over the last five years, however, it has become broader-based and more ambitious, supported by the Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies, and by the rising profile of Teaching and Learning across the sector.

Key areas of growth in applied language research are intercultural communication, translation and interpreting studies, and modern languages pedagogy.

In the last five years, intercultural communication has become an important new research focus, linked to the spread of postgraduate degrees in translation and interpreting. More recently, language pedagogy has been given fresh impetus with the establishment of 74 HEFCE-funded Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, almost half of them in pre-1992 (including several Russell Group) institutions. While only one Centre (at SOAS) focuses wholly on languages, several others have a significant language dimension, and in Northern Ireland a Centre focusing on languages has been established at Ulster.

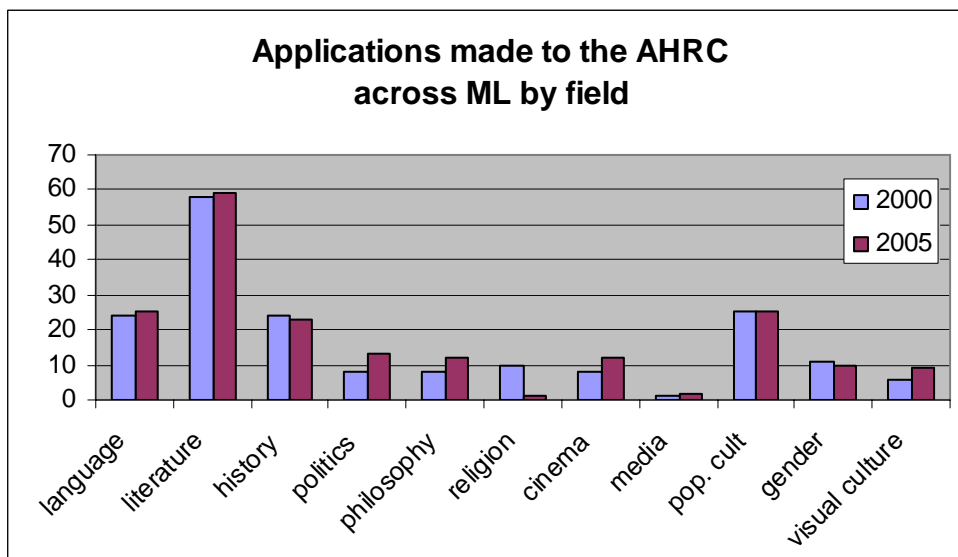
(See <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/tinits/cetl/final/>)

Literature teaching in schools is being displaced by attention to a wider range of cultural topics in their social and historical contexts.

Curriculum changes and option choice patterns in secondary schools are exposing students to more courses in cultural and area studies, and less in literature (see *Hard Going But Worth It*, Angela Gallagher-Brett, Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies, University of Southampton: 2006). This is influencing their module choices and the development of modern languages curricula in higher education. These, in turn, are conditioning the profile of new appointments, the focus of modern languages research, and the contexts in which it is undertaken. While literature options continue to predominate in many pre-92 departments, student enrolment on them is now generally much lower. Conversely, a marked rise is reported in the teaching of comparative literature, in translation, across languages.

Literature remains the principal focus of externally-funded academic research in modern languages, but the balance has been shifting for more than a decade.

Data from AHRC Research Grant and Leave applications indicate that literary topics continue to be largest area of focus, though there are significant numbers of projects in popular culture, language and history, while cinema studies, politics and philosophy are growing fields of interest. These shifts are linked to areas of significant undergraduate growth.



Applications made by modern languages staff for AHRC Research Grants and Research Leave awards in 2000 and 2005

This underlines a slower pace of change in research than in the undergraduate curriculum, but also reflects the expansion of the literary canon under the influence of cultural and gender studies. The historically lower application rates in many smaller, less traditional and more interdisciplinary departments may also be a factor.

Literary research focuses increasingly on modern narrative, centres on a relatively limited number of major authors, and often has a social-political focus. AHRC applications by both staff and postgraduate modern languages researchers indicate that work on non-traditional forms, such as the graphic novel or detective fiction, is beginning to challenge numerically studies of theatre and poetry.

Literature's place at the centre of modern languages research is being challenged chiefly by cultural studies and socio-historical approaches, particularly among early-career researchers. The rise of cultural studies in particular over the last 20 years has contributed to an important expansion of the discipline.

'The main area of research in Iberian Languages and Literatures is no longer exclusively or even substantially literary criticism; much work that the panel read dealt with historical and cultural studies.'

(RAE panel report, Iberian Languages and Literatures, 2001)

Cultural studies has had a major impact on modern languages curricula and research patterns over the last 20 years. As with literary theory in the 1980s, its institutionalization, objects, methods, and perceived consequences have not gone unchallenged. Partly because of this, its rise has prompted a broadly productive rethinking of the discipline and its future. It has helped to open up traditionally marginal literary and cultural forms to scrutiny and has reaffirmed the importance of social and historical contexts. It has refreshed thinking on some established methodologies and neglected topics areas, and been an important stimulus to interdisciplinary and collaborative work, especially among early career researchers in modern languages. The rate of its development, and the quality and interdisciplinary character of the work produced, were highlighted in RAE 2001.

'Cultural studies itself has developed considerably, drawing on research in philosophy, gender, film, and literary studies'

(RAE panel report, French, 2001)

‘Most publications incorporated in varying amounts literary/ critical/ cultural theory, many in a highly sophisticated way’

(RAE panel report, Iberian Languages and Literatures, 2001)

The rise of cultural studies over the last 20 years has contributed to an important expansion of the discipline, but an uneven one.

Cultural studies research is generally undertaken in less traditional departments. It is often found where early career researchers are clustered and where disciplinary boundaries are more permeable. For this and other reasons, its effects have been more marked in some languages than others. In RAE 2001, for example, the German panel noted a growth in film studies but made no mention of broader cultural research. This may also reflect the continuing importance of Germany’s critical theory tradition, which has itself been influential in some strands of cultural studies.

‘The list of research areas may look impressive, but there is great imbalance between the different areas and periods studied.’

(RAE panel report, Italian, 2001)

The embedding of film (and, more recently, cinema) studies within modern languages began in the 1980s, typically in French departments. Since then it has become a mainstay of modern languages curricula and research. This is especially true among postgraduate and early career researchers, and cinema studies is one of the most popular areas for AHRC Research Grant, Leave and Doctoral Award applications in modern languages. Visual cultural studies (which may be taken to include film) and visual studies (an extension of art history) have become increasingly important areas of development since the early 1990s.

There has been a marked intensification of research links and collaborations between modern languages and the social sciences over the last decade, and it is no longer confined to area studies.

At the Senior Researchers’ Consultancy Group meetings, colleagues identified quantitative methods based on social science models as proving invaluable for certain types of modern languages research – in computational linguistics, for example, or the analysis of complex survey data. The dominant modern languages paradigm nevertheless remains overwhelmingly qualitative.

The broader impact on modern languages research of the attention to social, historical and political contexts is difficult to quantify with precision. The French panel report for RAE 2001 notes that the quantity of French research in these areas fell markedly between 1996 and 2001; but it goes on to speculate that this might have been because ‘a large proportion of this work went to the European Studies panel’. Data from the most recent Research Leave and Doctoral Award applications nevertheless suggest that over a third of modern languages-based projects factor these contexts explicitly into their literary and cultural analysis.

The number of traditional history specialists based in modern languages departments is declining.

This partly reflects the fact that historical research in modern languages is now less constrained by conventional methods and topics, and more interdisciplinary. In some institutions, however, it is because staffing constraints are effectively consigning politics, social and historical research in modern languages to single-discipline departments.

‘Most Italian historians are in history departments now. [...] There has been a decline in Italian historical studies and specialists’.

(Professor of Italian)

As with linguistics researchers, the move to single-discipline departments risks deskilling modern languages experts and reducing the non-English language items included in bibliographies. In the longer term, some members of the Senior Researchers’ Consultancy Group suggest, this could contribute to a narrowing of analytical perspective.

Gender studies remains an important research focus.

Applications to AHRC Research Grant, Leave and Doctoral Award Schemes indicate that gender studies, so influential in expanding the canon in the 1990s, may now have peaked. Particularly among postgraduate researchers, however, questions of gender and sexuality remain an important focus for research on literary topics (especially pre-20th century), and in cinema and broader cultural studies.

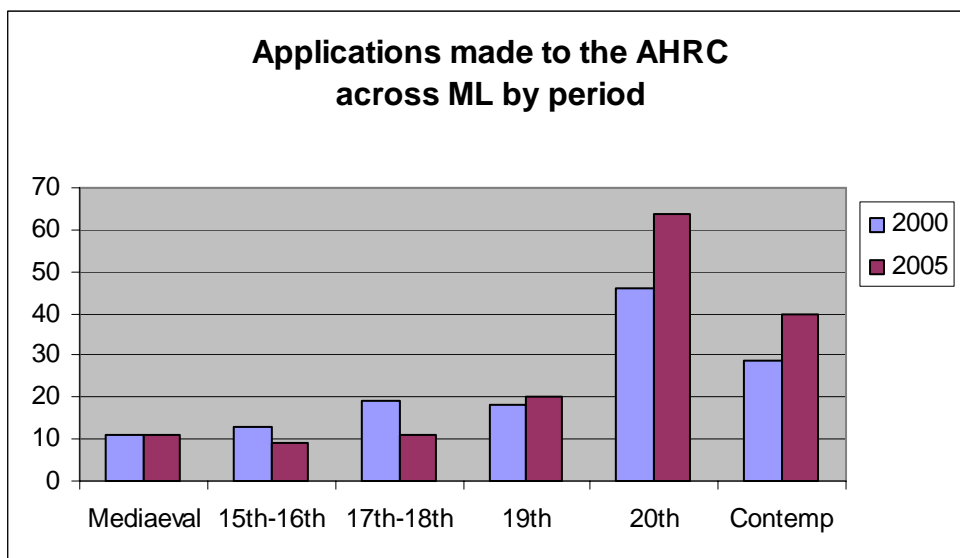
Postcolonial studies in various forms remains an important, and expanding, research focus.

The extension of postcolonial studies to departments of modern languages in the last decade and a half has brought new strategies for analysing texts and cultural practices in their socio-political contexts. Within modern languages, its influence can be traced back to post-92 institutions and technological universities in the early 1990s. Today it remains strongest in French (where it

overlaps with research in Francophone studies) and, increasingly, in Latin American cultural and literary studies.

Modern languages as a discipline has seen a quite dramatic shift towards the 20th century and contemporary periods over the last 15-20 years. It has accelerated in the last five years, possibly with the embedding of cultural studies.

In 2005, some two thirds of AHRC Research Grant and Leave applications in modern languages, and a similar proportion of Doctoral Award applications, were based in the 20th century and contemporary (post-1960) periods.



Applications made by modern languages staff for AHRC Research Grants and Research awards in 2000 and 2005

While there is some variation between languages, the medieval remains the most vibrant of the earlier periods and, like the 19th century, is benefitting from the impact of ICT

Panel reports from RAE 2001 confirm that high quality work is continuing to be produced on the medieval and early modern periods (including the Renaissance). They note, however, that it is being undertaken by a shrinking body of researchers.

‘The outlook for Medieval Studies gives cause for concern. As far as we could ascertain from submissions, there are currently no active researchers in permanent posts in this area under thirty years of age, only three under forty, and five between forty and fifty.’

(RAE panel report, German, Dutch and Scandinavian Languages, 2001)

Yet work on the medieval period is faring better than the 15th to 18th centuries. Research Leave and Grant applications with a medieval focus remained constant between 2000 and 2005. Project descriptions suggest that work in the medieval period is constantly being given fresh impetus by novel technical possibilities – including electronic editing techniques and databases – and new theoretical approaches, including insights from gender studies. The applications nevertheless reveal a clustering around a few major figures: in Italian studies, for example, around Dante and Boccaccio.

Early modern and Renaissance work submitted to panels in RAE 2001 was found to be of high quality, especially in textual scholarship, but involved a shrinking core of scholars.

‘Much good work [is] being done in the 14th and 15th centuries [...but] appointments are regrettably not keeping pace with retirements’.

(RAE panel report, French, 2001)

By 2005, the flow of Research Leave applications focussing on early modern and Renaissance topics had become a trickle and, in the case of Doctoral Award applications, all but dried up.

The 17th and 18th centuries have become ‘Cinderella centuries’, in imminent risk of disappearing without support.

The need for ‘new blood in these areas’ was noted by the French RAE panel in 2001. So far there has been little sign of it, however. The 17th and 18th centuries saw an already small number of ARHC Research Grant and Leave applications almost halving between 2000 and 2005; Doctoral Award applications slipped by a similar amount in 2004-5. While pockets of excellence remain, research mass here increasingly requires collaboration with scholars in the country where the modern languages is spoken. Along with 15th and 16th century studies, these are the areas of the discipline that, unsupported, are in the most imminent risk of disappearing from the UK’s modern languages research base.

There are signs that ‘a 300 year gap in research, from 1650-1950’ is opening up in Spanish, French and Germanic studies.

(Professor of Spanish)

Maintaining disciplinary cover and research expertise over this period is a growing challenge. Undergraduate and postgraduate demand is expanding the staffing base in new areas. Where specialists in earlier periods remain, they are increasingly expected to teach in the modern and contemporary periods.

Over time, especially where teaching is research-led, this can modify a department’s research profile.

‘Now, even colleagues who are not primarily modernists will have published in modern areas’

(Professor of Italian)

Nineteenth-century studies are faring rather better, partly through the embedding of ICT.

As with medieval research, 19th century studies have benefited from the availability of new electronic editorial techniques, and have seen a modest rise in AHRC Research Grant and Leave applications over the last five years. Literary research remains quite strongly represented although it tends to be centred on a relatively small number of writers, and the impact of less traditional critical approaches is uneven.

‘Nineteenth-century studies [...have] been predominantly positivist and exegetical in character, but there was encouraging evidence of more innovative critical approaches also being profitably applied’

(French RAE panel report, 2001)

These shifts have important resourcing implications.

In some languages the shift of emphasis towards the modern and contemporary periods is seen as largely positive. (Senior Researchers’ Consultancy Group meeting, 2nd June 2006) It is dynamizing modern languages research, and generating new thinking on new subjects. In Italian,

for example, which has been dominated until the last two decades by medieval and Renaissance studies, it is contributing to a wider spread of research topics, and helping to renew analytical approaches. But it is also presenting modern languages as a discipline with new challenges. There are significant financial and other costs in acquiring, embedding and supporting ICT. In areas of rapid growth, there is a need for new staff and materials, including library holdings in a range of media. There is evidence of progressive under-use of nationally and internationally important library holdings built up over decades on subjects in which UK research is now declining.

2.2 Changes in the objects of research

These disciplinary shifts are having a major impact on modern languages research. They are generating new research objects and themes, reinvigorating some older ones, and accelerating the decline of others.

The application of a gender perspective to medieval modern languages work over the last decade has yielded fresh insights, while ICT has made new subjects and techniques available to researchers in all periods. In general, however, research mass has decreased in most of the earlier periods and has tended to cluster around a limited number of topics. This has meant that new research objects have emerged mostly (though by no means only) in the 20th century and contemporary periods.

Literary studies have expanded to embrace new genres and new thematic focuses.

The last five to ten years have seen conferences, publications, and/ or funding applications centring on, for example, crime writing, science fiction, travel writing, fantasy and the graphic novel. The same period has seen the emergence of new thematic approaches, such as sports, ecology, and science in literature. Past conferences have included *The French Detective in Fact and Fiction* (Birmingham 1999), *Hispanic Detective Conference* (Royal Holloway, 2002) *The Fantastic in French Literature* (IRGS, London 2007), and *Sports Literature* (Sheffield 2001).

‘UK academics are contributing strongly in such fields as new women’s writing, travel writing, and crime fiction’.

(RAE panel report, French, 2001)

Research on popular and mass cultural practices continues to develop.

Popular and mass cultural practices have become an increasingly important research focus over the last decade. Major conferences have showcased work on feastdays, dance, craft-work, traditional and popular music, war memorials and cultural memory, while conferences on Italian, French and Hispanic screen culture (including internet) are scheduled for late 2006 and 2007. Examples of conferences include *Cultura popular!* (Manchester Metropolitan University 1999), *Spanish Screen Media: Cinema, Television, Internet* (Cambridge, December 2006) and projected conferences on Italian and French screen culture (IRGS, London, 2006, 2007).

Within cultural studies, transnational cinema studies and visual studies are areas of significant growth.

Film studies, with their more formalist emphasis, are ceding ground to cinema and star studies. Cinema studies combine a broad institutional and socio-political perspective with a strong international/ transnational dimension. At Cambridge, Manchester, Leeds, Southampton, Exeter, Newcastle and other universities with significant critical mass they are providing an important stimulus to cross-language modern languages research and international collaboration. Modern languages research in the field of visual culture has also grown over the last five years. In Research Leave and Doctoral Award applications it is often studied in relation to literary or other cultural forms. In institutions such as Durham and Cambridge for example, it is generating cross-language collaborations with a strong international dimension.

Modern languages research on politics, history and society usually has a marked cultural dimension, and is continuing to broaden in scope.

Conferences, publications and funding applications in the last five to ten years reflect their expansion to embrace the study of cultural memory and trauma, for example, oral histories, migration patterns, regionalism, cosmopolitanism, intellectual heritage, and (particularly in Germanic studies) the impact of science and technology. As applications for Research Grants, Leave and Doctoral Awards illustrate, these may be studied from an area studies perspective or in relation to literary or broader cultural material.

Developments in language research tend to reflect the embedding of ICT and growth in applied languages.

New objects of language research extend from advanced computational linguistics, with an important ICT and social science dimension, to discourse analyses of the language of advertising. Interpreting and intercultural communication (which now includes screen translation) are also areas of research growth. The broadening of literary studies is encouraging the study of less traditional genres in translation research.

Behind this diverse and dynamic picture, some subject areas are being lost to the modern languages research base.

Most of the subjects that are disappearing fall outside the modern period. In some cases the loss is considerable. It includes much pre-18th century Spanish and Italian textual criticism, for example, for long an area of international excellence and distinctiveness, but where projects may last longer than an RAE cycle.

Text editing and criticism are dying [...] in what was once the world's leading university system for this type of work'

(Professor of Italian)

This comment reflects a widely-held concern that diverting resources to areas of rapid growth may be compromising modern languages' disciplinary range and distinctiveness, and debilitating its research base.

'The balance of the discipline must be kept in mind, so that areas do not wither, resulting in intellectual impoverishment and in departments becoming less stimulating for staff and students'

(RAE panel report, Italian, 2001)

Some steps have been taken to safe-guard these areas. For example, the MHRA is encouraging and supporting text editing and criticism through the publication of scholarly editions and monographs.

2.3 Changes in research methodologies and approaches

The research context is shaped, to differing degrees, by institutional, regional, national, European and international research agendas and funding priorities. At the national level, the strengths and weaknesses of the RAE have played a crucial part in shaping the development of modern languages research for over a decade.

In institutions where it has become most productively integrated, the AHRC's promotion of more systematic postgraduate training provision is helping to professionalize the next generation of modern languages researchers.

In many institutions where students rarely or never apply for AHRC Doctoral Awards, opportunities for postgraduate training remain under-developed. Even in modern languages departments where applications are routine, and training has been systematized in response to AHRC recommendations, it may remain largely pastoral and pragmatic. But in many of the larger modern languages departments the introduction of more structured provision over the last five years is giving some new researchers greater confidence in their

ability to work in a more practised and professional manner. With innovations such as the AHRC-funded regional training hubs this provision is being made more widely available. The rise of the national or regional postgraduate colloquium is giving new researchers from a range of institutions an early opportunity to deliver their first conference paper. In some cases they may collaborate in organizing the conference, and they may even prepare the proceedings for publication. Partly because of these experiences, postgraduate researchers are increasingly able to speak with confidence at large open conferences. And when they apply for their first post they may already have several publications on their CV.

A national programme of training is helping PGR students to develop key research and transferable skills. The AHRC-funded Research Training Network (RTN) in Modern Languages provides subject-specific research training for UK registered MPhil/PhD students in Modern Languages. It currently has four hubs, at the IGRS in London and at the Universities of Birmingham, Leeds and Glasgow, each running a series of classes, workshops and events for PGR students in Modern Languages. The RTN has partner institutions across the UK, offering specific training, for example the Italian Department at Royal Holloway, and generic skills training, for example the School of Humanities at the University of Southampton. The training events of the partner institutions are listed on the RTN website (http://igrs.sas.ac.uk/event_subsystem/index.php).

Postgraduate modern linguists tend to be more theoretically aware but more eclectic in their use of theory.

Some of the theory that postgraduates encounter will include elements of the 'high theory' that was influential in departments of French, and to a lesser degree Spanish and German, in the 1980s. Today, however, the systematic application of a single body of theory – whether poststructuralism or postmodernism, psychoanalysis or literary theory – to texts or other cultural forms is unusual in modern languages research. In Russian and Slavonic studies, a rich source for structuralist poetics and linguistics in the 1970s and '80s, there has been a narrowing of theoretical focus.

'In literary and cultural theory the study of the Bakhtin school has burgeoned in recent years, but other theorists and schools are largely neglected'

(RAE panel report, Russian, Slavonic and Eastern European Languages, 2001).

Like the objects it addresses, the theoretical underpinning of cultural and literary analysis has become more diverse and more fragmented. Where traces of high theory remain they tend to be deployed more pragmatically, often with concepts drawn from a range of other sources, such as globalization/transnationalization paradigms, the social sciences, or anthropology.

This new eclecticism is clearest in certain rising sub-disciplines. Visual cultural studies draws its concepts from cultural studies, for example, critical theory, film and media studies, art history, social theory, psychoanalysis, postmodern and globalization theory. Where a specific critical approach is systematically applied, however, it is often more explicitly politicized. Post-Marxist thought underpins forms of subaltern studies and postcolonial theory, for example, and social theory (especially of the kind inspired by Pierre Bourdieu) remains fundamental to a good deal of modern languages cultural studies research.

All the major languages and all types of institution have seen a reduction in formalist literary analysis and traditional historical research over the last 20 years, and an increased attention to contexts.

Some languages have undergone these shifts more rapidly than others. The differences are clearest when they map on to profound cultural and political shifts in the countries where the language is spoken: the collapse of the USSR, for example, German unification, European and international migration flows, the rise of Latino communities in the US, or the high strategic profile of certain less commonly taught languages since 9/11.

There has been some embedding of social science paradigms, particularly among early career researchers.

This tendency is currently broadening and accelerating, largely in response to interdisciplinary thematic initiatives on the part of the AHRC, the Leverhulme Trust, and ESRC. As yet, the absolute numbers of modern languages researchers affected remain small, and they are concentrated chiefly in area studies, linguistics, and some contemporary cultural research. There is little evidence of a broader shift away from the traditional qualitative focus of modern languages research towards more quantitative social science models.

These shifts have been eased by the fact that there has never been a single, dominant, methodology in UK modern languages research.

Quite different methodological emphases can be found across and within language areas.

‘The last 15 years has seen a greater interest in theory’

(Professor of Italian 1)

‘Theory is used, but with caution. We do not embrace a single critical “-ism”; theory, when it’s used, is anchored in context’.

(Professor of Italian 2)

‘There has been a foregrounding of theory since the mid ‘80s. But in the last five years there has been a shift away from theory, especially more speculative and/ or inaccessible forms. Its residue, or broader cultural and sociological theory, underpins a good deal of current work.’

(Professor of Spanish)

Even where a specific body of theory is systematically applied, the link between theory and methodology remains loose in practice. Theory may provide a context, aims, and ways of conceptualizing the subject of the research, but it does not provide a precise methodology. In order to make research more tightly focused and framed, postgraduate training encourages the formulation of specific research questions. But even – or perhaps especially – in the current pluralistic climate, finding an approach to give body to that question often remains a challenge. Partly as a result, the emphasis on professional training is perceived by some supervisors and postgraduates as diverting energies on which too many different demands are already made, and as inhibiting opportunities for intellectual curiosity and creativity to engage more open-endedly with the specificities of the subject area. (Senior Researchers Consultancy Group meeting, 2 June 2006)

Despite significant common ground, these specificities vary from language to language. French frequently takes its theoretical models from France. In Germanic Studies, research on postcolonial and gender-related topics is less likely to take its lead from Germany than from US scholars. In Latin American studies, this tendency co-exists with the growing use of Latin American paradigms, which may themselves be informed by British cultural and French social theory.

Modern languages research is largely individual, though with growing collaboration.

Like most areas of the Humanities, modern languages has traditionally been – and remains – a discipline grounded principally in individual research. Over the last five years, however, the broadening of the modern languages curriculum, developments in postgraduate training, and strategic funding initiatives by the AHRC, ESRC, the Leverhulme Trust, and the EU’s Fifth and Sixth Framework Programmes have significantly increased interdisciplinary and collaborative activity in some areas of modern languages research.

The growth of modern languages research on translating and interpreting, for example, intercultural communication, area studies, and comparative literary and cinema studies is stimulating collaborative working. It is happening across languages, departments, schools and faculties. In some instances it is diverting resources to smaller research clusters and historically under-resourced areas, and opening up new sites of research potential.

This process is being supported by developments in postgraduate training. They are providing an unprecedented range of opportunities for new researchers to exchange ideas and collaborate across the disciplines. Some of these opportunities arise across schools or faculties, typically in the form of postgraduate colloquia. Others are inter-institutional: within regional training networks, for example, at summer schools, or at conferences organized by individual universities, professional associations or learned societies.

Institutions and modern languages departments are responding to these opportunities in ways that reflect their individual ethos and their understanding of current higher education agendas. They are doing so in a climate of intensifying competition, growing concentration of activity, and tighter targeting of time and other core resources. Researchers in modern languages are negotiating these constraints with growing confidence, and are increasingly likely to be involved in collaborative projects across languages, disciplines, and institutions. This is helping to create critical mass and, in some cases, may provide some support for vulnerable subject areas. At the other end of the spectrum, it can stimulate regional, national, European, international or cross-sectoral partnerships able to mount major interdisciplinary conferences and make significant project bids to national and international funding bodies.

‘At [my university], with a relatively small School of Languages and Cultures (which does not include English), we have organized ourselves on a number of research themes which reflect the interests of a number of academic staff. This has made possible the organization of large interdisciplinary conferences and large bids to AHRC or ESRC’

(Professor of Spanish)

The AHRC’s Research Networks and Workshops scheme provides a valuable framework for the exploration and development of larger international projects.

The productiveness of, and constraints on, collaboration vary within and across language areas.

One professor of Italian notes, for example, that ‘international collaboration with Italy is rare [and] there are few formal links’, while collaboration between UK film specialists and colleagues in Italian or French institutions may be inhibited by those colleagues’ often quite different approach to the

subject. Where it happens, collaboration can have intellectual and practical implications for future research. In Spanish and Latin American studies, for example, increased involvement in US-based projects is introducing new perspectives into UK research. In some cases, such as the reconfiguring of Latin American within Pan-American Studies, this may have potentially far-reaching consequences

Collaborative research is increasing most rapidly among early career researchers.

While large externally-funded collaborative projects led by senior researchers can be found in all the major languages, they remain the exception. One reason for this is the need to negotiate unfamiliar methodological approaches, funding mechanisms, and disciplinary paradigms, which may be perceived by more established staff as a diversion of energies and already limited research time. EU Framework Programmes are widely recognized as a rich source of funding for large collaborative projects, for example, but the bidding process remains a serious disincentive in a research area with little tradition of complex grant applications.

For all these reasons, large collaborative projects in the Humanities present new challenges. Neither individual modern languages researchers nor their institutions necessarily feel they have the expertise needed to initiate, manage and sustain such projects effectively. Nor is it widely understood that even the most successful are likely to need continued support after the initial project funding is exhausted.

‘Collaborative programmes have been very well received but their wider effects are negligible so far, and it’s not clear that much of what has been started will become embedded.’

(Professor of Italian)

On this unfamiliar terrain, many colleagues would welcome opportunities to share ideas and good practice, for example, in networking, information gathering, formulating and refining key concepts, building contact databases and exploiting ICT more effectively.

The trend towards interdisciplinarity research is an important driver in the spread of collaborative modern languages research.

Efforts within the humanities to promote interdisciplinarity have been hampered by the lack of a common understanding of the term. At the level of the individual researcher it is most widely applied to work based in a single discipline that draws on the assumptions, data, practices and/or procedures of one or more others. Their traditional breadth has long made this form of interdisciplinarity a feature of modern languages departments. This is

especially true of smaller ones, where it tends to be driven by internal dynamism and necessity. While the need to remain au courant with two (or more) bodies of thought may present challenges, interdisciplinarity can enrich the experience of researchers and their students at all levels.

Another important stimulus to interdisciplinary work has been the embedding of cultural studies, which may deploy insights from fields as diverse as film studies, art history, social theory, politics, social anthropology, and gender studies.

Undergraduate degrees present barriers to interdisciplinary research

Despite its broad institutionalization, there remain some serious barriers to interdisciplinary research. The first is that most undergraduate degrees do little to prepare new researchers for interdisciplinary work. Resourcing constraints mean that joint degrees within, and even across, faculties are more often two single degrees yoked together, and new postgraduates are likely to retain a single-disciplinary mindset. As noted, postgraduate training is providing new opportunities for interdisciplinary networking. But its impact is less clear in practice.

For established researchers the barriers to interdisciplinary research are largely practical.

The efforts of the AHRC, the Leverhulme Trust and ESRC to address long-standing obstacles to securing funding for inter- and cross-disciplinary projects have been encouraging for modern languages researchers. It is, however, too early to evaluate their impact.

The publication of research arising from inter- or cross-disciplinary research has been eased by growth in the journals market, but continues to present challenges. Modern languages researchers may find it more difficult to publish in mainstream journals – on film, for example, anthropology, or social theory – other than as a near-‘native informant’ working from an area studies perspective. And external referees, already in short supply as a consequence of the surge in journal production, tend to be still harder to find for interdisciplinary material with an extensive foreign-language bibliography.

Where monographs are concerned, commercial factors also play their part.

‘Interdisciplinary work is much more difficult to market as it ranges over several communities of interest and too often struggles to find a significant market among them’.

(Commissioning editor)

RAE panels have also had difficulty dealing effectively with cross-over material in the past. This may underlie the tendency of some recruitment and

promotion panels to misrecognize or undervalue interdisciplinary research, which can inhibit a researcher's career progression and mobility. But there are encouraging signs that the strategic prioritizing of innovation is giving rise to new interdisciplinary opportunities and appointments.

For the moment, however, it seems that genuinely interdisciplinary research – as opposed to the multi- or cross-disciplinary activity of a 'lone scholar' – is more often found in the collaboration of two or more researchers from different disciplines. Where this collaboration enjoys effective institutional and/ or external support, participants tend to develop a more sustained will to work with and through differences, making the process more productive.

ICT is a key driver in the embedding and development of interdisciplinary and collaborative modern languages research.

It is increasingly regarded as indispensable for aspects of data collection and analysis (questionnaires, surveys, interviews, computer screen capture), the creation of virtual research environments, and the compiling of multilingual and other corpora for linguistics research. Without it, some large and complex modern languages research projects that integrate quantitative and qualitative analysis would simply not be possible. The accessibility of data and image sets, screen grab and image manipulation software have been a spur to the development of visual and audio-visual studies. Across all areas of modern languages research, the rapid transfer of electronic data is easing collaborative work, both nationally and internationally.

Large-scale textual criticism and editing projects are also increasingly likely to be undertaken electronically and to draw on digital imaging. Innovative externally funded examples can be seen in Manchester, for example, Liverpool, Reading and Sheffield. This has brought a new dynamism to textual studies in some periods, notably the middle ages and the nineteenth century. It has created the conditions for enhanced quantity and quality of outputs; facilitated the generation of variant readings, glossaries and indices; and enabled the online publication of whole editions of authors' works that would not otherwise have found a publisher.

These developments in the use and embedding of ICT are changing how modern languages research is conceived, framed, undertaken and disseminated in ways that we are already taking for granted.

The development of online encyclopaedias and databases, resources such as the Humbul Humanities Hub, the availability of e-journals, all are cutting the time spent on routine research-related travel. While immersion in the foreign culture remains essential for modern languages specialists, this time saving may be especially valuable for postgraduates; it helps to offset the limitations imposed on research travel by enlarged teaching and training commitments, shorter-term goals and deadlines, and funding difficulties. The excellence of UK library holdings in certain key areas such as Dante studies continues to draw international scholars to the UK; it is unclear for how much longer.

Despite these widely-acknowledged benefits, ICT has a less important role in UK modern languages research than in the US, for example.

The volume of advanced computer-based work being undertaken in the UK has increased significantly, especially in larger institutions; but there is still very little.

‘ICT is now less likely to be an add-on and more likely to be a core element in the design of research projects, but it currently drives fewer than half of them’.

(Director of the ICT in Arts and Humanities Research Programme)

While the availability of electronic resources is increasing exponentially every year, the main modern languages research resource remains library-based and the enormous majority of outputs continues to be in print form

The penetration of ICT in most institutions and most modern languages departments is now so thorough that the very few researchers not making use of it in one form or another can be assumed to have actively opted not to do so. For the rest, access to training in the use of more sophisticated research tools and techniques will remain a crucial part of modern languages researchers’ continuing professional development. There are signs that the necessary critical mass has now been achieved to enable this to happen organically. That will become increasingly true as a growing proportion of postgraduates are trained in the use of ICT for a range of purposes, according to their areas of specialism: the creation and use of databases, for example, the generation of indexes, quantitative analysis, or the use of Endnote. At present, however, the availability of this training, and of the hardware or institutional space to apply it in practice, remain uneven.

The AHRC’s participation in the e-Science initiative gave an important impulse to the promotion of advanced modes of collaboration. ICT can only aid collaboration between colleagues, faculties, institutions and countries effectively, however, if it can engage those involved.

‘ICT can make collaboration much simpler, but it needs social contacts in real time to support it and to get people interested’.

(The Director of the ICT in Arts and Humanities Research Programme)

And as its use becomes embedded – as corpus studies grows in UK linguistics, for example, and collaboration with social sciences becomes more widespread – this is likely to require more support rather than less.

2.4 International distinctiveness

The international distinctiveness of UK research in modern languages is based on informed judgements.

It is difficult to establish a firm evidence base for what is distinctive about UK research in modern languages. To a large extent the sense of distinction is based on the informed judgement of senior academics, who are familiar with research in other countries. Comparisons can be drawn with research in the countries whose language, culture and society are the object of study, with research in other English-speaking countries, especially the US, and with research in modern foreign languages in non-English-speaking countries. The distinctiveness of UK research appears differently in each of the three comparator categories.

‘UK research in modern languages compares very favourably with our international comparators especially in the funding opportunities now available’
(Senior researcher in Italian)

UK research brings distinctively different approaches.

Implicitly and increasingly explicitly, UK research directs a ‘stranger’s gaze’ on the countries it studies. Hence, British research on Chinese literature, French thought, Japanese theatre or Italian film, for example, brings a different perspective from that offered by scholars who are native to China, France, Japan or Italy respectively.

UK research draws on distinctively different theoretical frameworks.

UK-based research on other cultures commonly draws on different theoretical frameworks, approaches and value-systems from those which are based in the cultures studied. Frequently this work is framed by concepts developed by British or American scholars, who are little known in other countries. This is visible for example in work on Francophone writers, which draws on paradigms of post-colonial theory developed by Homi Bhabha or Gayatri Spivak.

‘The UK has been very good at creating links with the US and Italy. What the UK does is different from both of them, because UK scholars bridge the methodologies of both, and have not closed their ears to either – which makes the UK distinctive.’

(Professor of Italian)

UK research in modern languages is distinctively comparative.

It frequently offers a cross-cultural perspective in which comparisons between UK and foreign cultures are invited and sometimes explored in greater depth. It is encouraged in this by the close and frequent interaction between UK scholars and their colleagues in some other European countries. This tends to distinguish it from US-based research, in which comparisons between the American context and the culture studied are less frequent.

UK research in modern languages is distinctively interdisciplinary.

In many other countries, including the US, the boundaries between disciplines are more heavily policed than in the UK. In many cases, the development of interdisciplinary approaches was originally led by the old polytechnic sector, where the more flexible relationships between disciplines enabled such studies as area studies, feminism and other cultural theories to flourish before being taken up by pre-92 institutions. Applications to the AHRC illustrate the fact that researchers in the UK address a wide range of topics using a wide range of methodologies. In continental Europe, this range of topics and methodologies is commonly distributed between several disciplines, which have limited interaction between them.

‘Divisions here between Spanish and Latin American researchers are less evident than in the US (where researchers are less likely to work across both fields) facilitating comparative work’

(Professor of Hispanic Studies)

UK research in modern languages is distinctively empirical.

There is a common stereotype that British scholars are focused on empirical work, to which they bring a pragmatic approach. This is to some extent founded on the strong emphasis placed by UK researchers on work in archives and libraries. This is found not only in cultural and social historians but also in specialists in language and critical theory.

'Broadly speaking, US research in Spanish and Latin American Studies is less empirical and archive based than in the UK'

(Professor of Hispanic studies)

'British pragmatism/ hybridity is respected'

(Professor of Italian)

UK modern languages cultural studies is world-leading.

UK scholars created the concept of French cultural studies, Italian cultural studies and others, typically blending ideas from scholars such as Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall with appropriate theories of culture from the countries studied. There are several UK-based journals in this area, such as *French Cultural Studies*, the *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, book series, such as the OUP series, which includes *German Cultural Studies*, *Russian Cultural Studies*. This has occasioned adverse reactions on occasion, where commentators in the country studied have seen cultural studies approaches as an arm of Anglo-Saxon imperialism.

'In certain areas (eg cultural studies) the UK is the world leader: in others it lags internationally in quantity though not in quality'

(Professor of Hispanic Studies)

'Thus the fact, for instance, that this 'discipline' does not exist in the French university and intellectual fields did not prevent Routledge from publishing a compendium entitled *French Cultural Studies* on the model of *British Cultural Studies* (there are also volumes of *German Cultural Studies* and *Italian Cultural Studies*)'

(Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant, 'On the Cunning of Imperialist Reason', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 1999, vol16(1): 47.

Pockets of UK excellence exist in research areas where activity is relatively limited.

Work on the literature and culture of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries is done by a declining number of scholars, focused in a small number of institutions. (Medieval studies appear to have fared better, perhaps as a result of the greater difference between that period and our own, which gives medieval culture a more exotic quality.) The work done in these areas is often of very high quality, and the authors studied are often iconic figures in the national culture (Dante, Cervantes, Goethe, Molière etc), with many scholars active in their home country.

‘Spanish academics tend to focus on areas which have little coverage in the UK – eg 16th, 17th and 18th centuries and philology – making direct comparisons difficult. There are nevertheless pockets of excellence in all of these in certain UK institutions ... and some collaboration takes place with Spanish scholars. Catalan studies in the UK are unequalled outside of Catalonia’

(Professor of Hispanic studies)

UK scholars are more willing to collaborate with colleagues abroad.

Senior scholars in all of the major languages report a high level of international activity, involving many collaborative activities with colleagues in other countries. These are often based in active participation in international associations and conferences. Some links are built on European consortia (e.g. networks within the Framework Programmes) or institutional exchanges (e.g. within the SOCRATES scheme). In most cases the strongest links are with scholars in the country of study and with those in the US. UK participants are less constrained by disciplinary boundaries in partnerships, and therefore able to take part in a wider range of partnerships. Researchers in modern languages have the advantage of linguistic and cross-cultural competence, which enables them to develop stronger relationships with other European counterparts than colleagues in other arts and humanities disciplines. These relationships have been assisted by the AHRC’s support for joint research with colleagues in a range of other countries, and by AHRC and British Academy support for international conferences.

‘French is particularly international, and has links especially with France itself and the US’

(Senior researcher in French)

‘Despite pockets of high-level UK expertise, Chicano and Latino Studies, trans-border, migratory and hybridity issues figure more prominently on US research agendas and are generally stronger there. The flow of publications and the increasing involvement of UK researchers in US projects is beginning to embed them more widely in the UK.’

(Senior researcher in Spanish and Latin American Studies)

UK research on technology-enhanced language learning has been world leading.

UK scholars working on technology enhanced approaches to language learning have been among the most active and innovative in the world. Successive injections of government funding in the 1990s enabled British academics to take the lead in the formation of the European Association for Computer-Assisted Language Learning, and to found the journal ReCALL (C.U.P.), which carries articles relating to theoretical debates on language-learning strategies. More recent investment from JISC has fostered the development of research into elearning approaches, which are being taken forward by modern languages scholars. This area has traditionally been strong in post-1992 institutions, and has now been taken up by many pre-1992 universities. However, there is evidence that this type of research gains limited recognition in RAE, and that it is increasingly pursued by staff on teaching-led contracts, e.g. in Language Centres.

UK researchers publish in foreign languages.

Many UK researchers in modern languages publish in the language of the culture studied, and are frequently published by journals and publishing houses in the countries concerned. They are generally more active in this than their counterparts in other Anglophone countries, especially the US. The benefit of publishing in other languages is that it enables colleagues to engage more fully in scholarly debates, especially within Europe. Conversely, there are risks in that such publications may be less readily recognised within an English-speaking research culture. The developing emphasis on metrical approaches to research assessment is likely to exacerbate these risks.

‘French scholars don’t like reading English, and this is a barrier. You need to publish in the relevant language in order to be part of the debate in the country concerned’

(Professor of French)

PART THREE

The Research Base

The last decade has seen significant changes in degree-level provision of Modern Languages in UK universities: language degree programmes at many of the post-'92 universities have undergone rapid contraction, whereas most Russell Group universities have seen stability or even growth. While many language departments have discontinued their specialist degrees and switched into institution-wide language programmes for non-specialists, a smaller number have expanded and diversified their degree programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level. These and other changes have had an impact on the research base and the way in which modern languages research is undertaken.

3.1 Capacity and capability

Modern Languages researchers encounter obstacles in applying for new funding opportunities.

As established in 1.3, AHRC application statistics indicate that modern languages researchers are not taking advantage of new funding opportunities, especially external funding for individual and group research, to the same extent as researchers in other subject areas covered by the AHRC.

The authors of this review sought the views of senior colleagues on this issue and identified four perceived obstacles to applying for research council schemes:

1. Modern languages colleagues were not confident that time would be made available within their own institutions to manage research teams
2. Application procedures for major awards were seen as time-consuming, and schemes involving postgraduates were a problem since applicants from abroad might not qualify for support.
3. Heavy teaching loads in modern languages have made managing large-scale research projects particularly difficult in small departments. It is not easy to replace staff even when they have received funding to be bought out of teaching.
4. The interdisciplinary nature of much modern languages research means that colleagues are uncertain which research council, or which panel within a research council, they should apply to.

Research thrives best where staff have time, postgraduates and post-doctoral assistants.

Surveys conducted for this review in 2006 among both senior and junior staff confirm the same generic factors for research to thrive:

- a. Time remains the critical resource for research. Universities and research funding bodies play a key role in providing the research leave that enables staff to complete their research projects.
- b. Research is promoted by strong postgraduate communities.
- c. Short-term postdoctoral and research assistant posts are increasing research capacity, especially as a result of AHRC funding.

Support for travel and manageable teaching loads are required for research in modern languages

Staff mobility is a key factor in modern languages research since, despite the growing impact of ICT, much of the research requires study visits abroad. It is also critical for developing and maintaining collaborative networks with non-UK partners, which are particularly important in modern languages.

Teaching loads are viewed as a key constraint on research capacity. Some staff identify language teaching as onerous and rarely related directly to their research interests. Some institutions have responded by recruiting specialist language teachers who do not have research obligations.

New approaches to research and research organisation are emerging

Within modern languages, the following factors are regarded as of increasing importance:

- a. The embedding of ICT is widely seen as enhancing UK research capability and promoting collaboration.
- b. The AHRC research leave and other funding programmes are seen to have enhanced the quantity and quality of modern languages research over the last five years, and driven an increase in project-based and interdisciplinary work.
- c. Major research grants being allocated to senior staff, who have the role of leading and managing a small team of more junior researchers.

3.2 The staff base

The majority of modern languages staff undertake both teaching and research

Around a quarter of modern languages staff are on teaching-only contracts. These staff members are found in all departments to a varying extent. They include teaching specialists both in research-led departments and in departments without a research profile. They also include short-term teaching staff replacing colleagues who have been bought out of their teaching in order to concentrate on research, for example as a result of an AHRC matching leave award. In terms of academic function the HESA breakdown of modern languages staff for 2004/5 indicates 3.4% percent of staff on research-only contracts, 26% on teaching-only contracts, and 63% on teaching and research contracts.

Academic Function		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Teaching only	731	26.3
	Research only	93	3.4
	Teaching and research	1750	63.0
	Neither	50	1.8
	Total	2624	94.4
	Unknown	155	5.6
Total		2779	100.0

HESA statistics, total staff FTE by function, 2004/05 (Appendix B)

There are now relatively large numbers of staff in modern languages departments who were educated outside the UK.

As identified in 1.2, HESA statistics for 2004/5 show that 37% of Modern Languages staff are non-UK nationals, with particularly large numbers from Western Europe: France, Germany, Italy, and Spain (Appendix B, table 10).

A report on the provision of Dutch in the UK

<http://www.alcs.group.shef.ac.uk/databases/survey.htm> estimates the number of full-time academics whose main focus is Dutch to be 12, with all but one or two of these coming from abroad.

‘We have no problem with the recruitment of researchers from other countries. Many stay, and are committed to doing so. A problem only arises if too many are short term visitors’

(Professor, Japanese Studies)

In consultations with senior staff, it appeared that this has advantages but also gives rise to concerns. Some colleagues point out that language departments traditionally have a high percentage of non-UK nationals. They

approve of the international mix of staff regard it as appropriate for the subject area. They also emphasize its stimulating effect on research. Recruitment of non-UK staff has meant that more research generated within UK is actually published abroad, and this is generally seen as a welcome engagement with the debate in the countries that are the objects of study.

However, there is concern among some colleagues that employing staff educated abroad may be a growing trend that will lead to a loss of the distinctiveness of UK research in Modern Languages. The relatively high percentage of staff educated abroad is taken by some senior academics as a sign that there is a shortage of strong UK candidates for posts and that the UK is unable to renew the profession without drawing on the international market. It is also suggested that academics from abroad do not always have sufficient knowledge of the UK academic/research culture and that they require a long time to acquire such knowledge. This puts smaller languages in particular at a disadvantage in the competition for funds at institutional and research council levels.

There have been significant falls in staffing in some traditional areas of research in modern languages

RAE data show that the total number of staff returned as research active in European studies and single-language panels rose by around 80 between 1992 and 2001. Within this same period, the number of staff returned to single-language panels fell by around 150. These changes mainly reflect the movement of some universities from single-language panels to European studies. However, Iberian and Latin American Languages saw an increase of 8% in staff FTEs and Italian staff FTEs rose by 10%.

RAE Panel	Staff FTE		
	1992	2001	change %
European Studies	332.5	558.7	68%
French	497.6	446	-11%
German, Dutch and Scandinavian Languages	290.7	254.9	-12%
Russian, Slavonic, East European Languages	115.9	77.3	-34%
Linguistics	257.6	210.3	-19%
Iberian and Latin American Languages	191.4	207.5	8%
Italian	94.4	103.4	10%

RAE statistics, staff FTE, 1992 and 2001 (Appendix K)

Staff retirements have resulted in the loss of some research capacity.

Responses to a questionnaire sent to heads of department/schools of modern languages (Appendix H) indicate that staffing reductions have been experienced in some areas, placing greater administrative and teaching loads on those remaining.

‘Teaching loads are always in excess of ten hours a week...research days are often interrupted by committee meetings’

(Delphi participant)

Several subject associations for individual languages report that senior staff who have retired have not always been replaced at senior level, and this means that there are abrupt losses in research capacity and imbalances in the range of research undertaken.

‘The Professor of Dutch at UCL has recently taken up a new position in the Netherlands without being replaced. This means that the UK no longer has a[n established] chair in the subject’

(Senior Lecturer, Dutch Studies)

Overall, however, there is no indication of any wave of destabilising retirements, feared by some RAE panels in 2001, if recent recruitment patterns continue: a 2006 survey among heads of school/department at 38 institutions shows that they expect a total of 122.5 retirements in the next five years. The same heads report a total of 227.5 members of staff recruited over the last five years. The survey also indicates that some retiring non-research-active staff are being replaced by junior colleagues who are strongly committed to research. (Appendix H)

‘Reductions in staff numbers in Japanese Studies have resulted in a proportional reduction in volume of research(ers), but also important has been the effect of the departure (sometimes due to retirement without replacement) in particular subject areas. So, some areas of research have remained very strong, and become stronger (eg. Japanese politics and international relations), while others have diminished considerably (eg. history)’

(Professor, Japanese Studies)

UK modern languages departments are now increasingly employing postdoctoral staff

Although there are no historical statistics, there appears to have been strong growth in the number of postdoctoral staff in modern languages, suggesting a change in the way that modern languages staff undertake research projects. The survey among heads of department/schools of modern languages, conducted for this review in 2006, showed that 22 universities employed a

total of 98.5 postdoctoral staff (Appendix F). This figure corresponds with HESA statistics which showed 94 ‘researchers’ (research assistants and post-doctoral researchers) in modern languages in 2004/05. (Appendix B, table 3)

3.3 The postgraduate community

RAE 2001 data show that around one third of modern languages PGR students were part-time. Almost half are part-time in some areas of research.

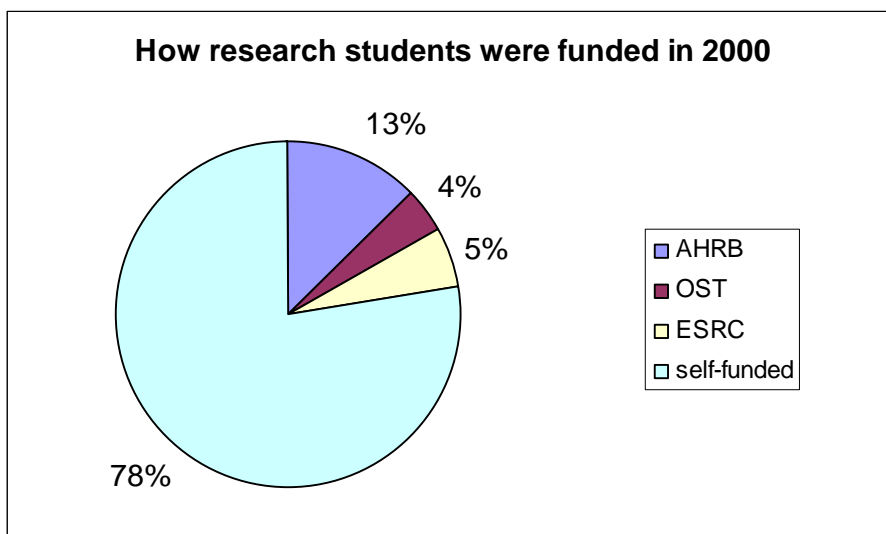
While this high percentage shows a welcome flexibility in the way departments are accommodating postgraduates, senior colleagues have pointed to the fact that part-time postgraduates have lower completion rates than full-timers.

‘Students that do register [for postgraduate study] are not normally from the UK, UK students are usually self-funded and part-time – part-time students have lower completion rates’

(Head of Department)

The higher drop-out rate among part-timers was noted in a survey undertaken as part of the British Academy’s *Review of Graduate Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences* (British Academy Report, September 2001, Professor Robert Bennett et al.)

The large number of part-time postgraduate students may be the result of the limited funding available at postgraduate level: RAE 2001 data and figures from the ESRC show that a maximum of 22% of postgraduates were funded by AHRB, the ESRC or by OST in 2000.



RAE 2001 figures, Research Studentships 2000 (Appendix I)

In spite of increases in modern languages success rates in the AHRC doctoral competition (1.3) there is concern among senior modern languages staff that good applicants for research studentships are not being funded and that the number of research students is too low to renew the profession in future years. This concern was expressed by colleagues in the less widely taught languages as well as in French, the largest single language group, during the consultation meetings held for this Review. The recent HEFCE/SFC/ESRC/AHRC Language Based Area Studies initiative is welcomed by the profession for having addressed the problem in some areas.

‘To encourage a better take-up at postgraduate level what we really need are more funded studentships for UK students; currently, good students are not getting funded’

(Senior Lecturer, French)

The current shortage of academic career opportunities in languages in the UK is a deterrent to students thinking of postgraduate study. From the universities’ perspective, the lack of candidates with language skills encourages them to recruit overseas postgraduates. One institution reports:

‘In area studies we are increasingly recruiting overseas to get candidates with the language skills necessary to undertake the projects available. For an AHRC funded project on the press in Eastern Europe we have recruited Germans and Romanians because no home candidates had the language repertoires necessary. The requirements of residence etc sometimes make it impossible to take the best candidates’

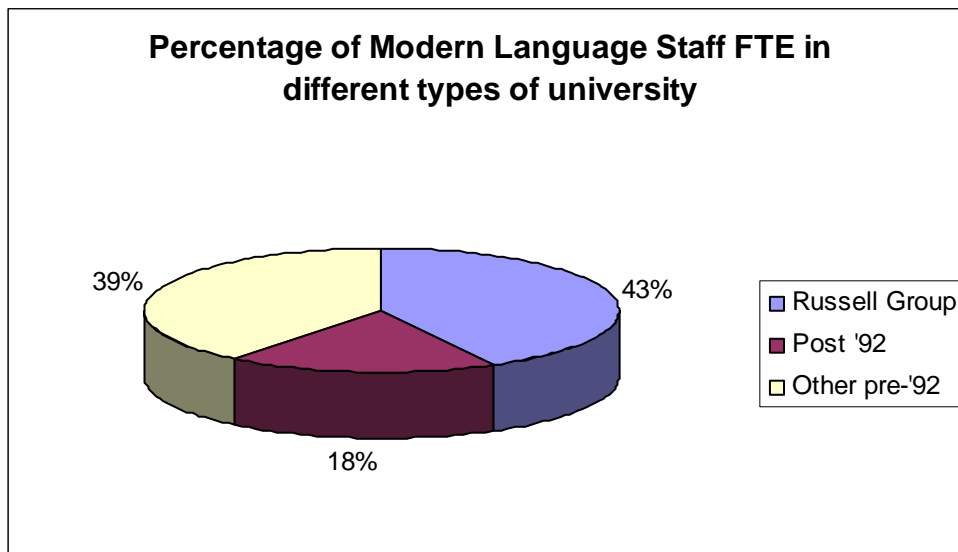
(Head of Department)

3.4 Institutional concentration of research

Modern languages staff are spread unevenly across the Higher Education sector

As demonstrated in 1.2, modern languages staff are increasingly concentrated in Russell Group institutions. HESA statistics show that across 15 Russell Group institutions, there are 1177 FTE modern languages staff, whereas in

33 post-'92 institutions there are just 506 FTE modern languages staff. 43% of modern languages staff are based in Russell Group institutions.



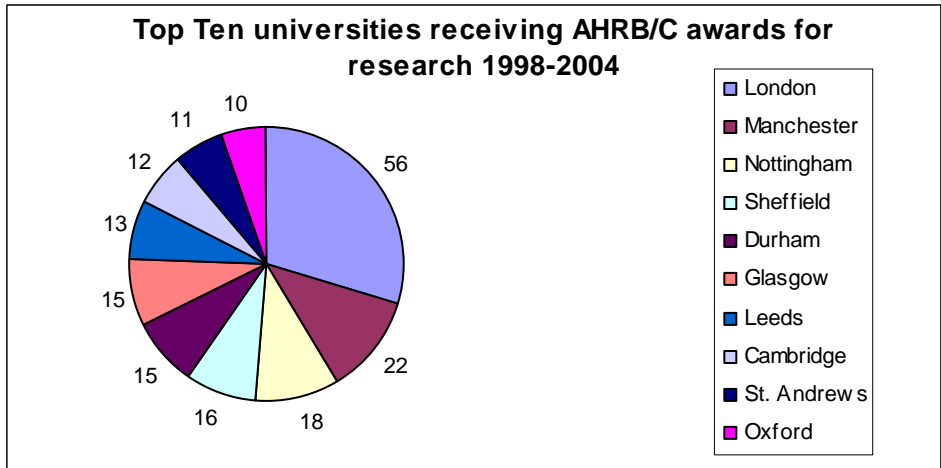
HESA statistics, total staff FTE by university type (Appendix B, table 13)

There is a widening internal resource gap between pre- and post-1992 institutions.

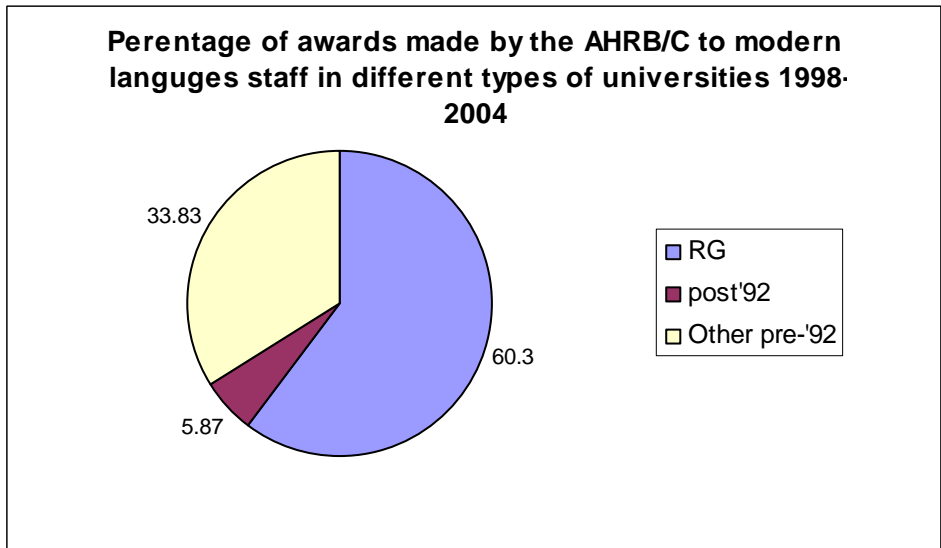
The Questionnaire sent to modern languages heads of department/school showed 100% of the Russell Group universities that responded had adequate internal funding schemes for modern languages staff. These schemes included sabbaticals, conference funding, research assistants and research studentships, and internal resources were seen as crucial for staff recruitment and retention. Some departments have introduced a strategic approach to research funding, supporting research-active staff by reducing their teaching loads. Among post-1992 universities that responded the figure for good internal funding schemes was just 28%. This differentiation means that external funding is particularly important for the new universities, but there is a close correlation between levels of internal and external funding.

External research funding for modern languages staff is concentrated in a relatively small number of universities.

Between 1998 and 2004 just ten universities received ten or more AHRB/C staff research awards, and these awards amounted to 55% of the total AHRC funding for staff research in modern languages.



In the same period Russell Group universities accounted for over 60% of modern languages staff research funding from AHRB/C:



English and Scottish universities were represented in the awards with 79.4% and 12.9% of the total respectively. Welsh universities received just 5.3% of all awards, and Northern Irish universities 2.4%. The small number of awards in Welsh universities may be partly explained by the scaling down of Modern Languages in general at Welsh universities (Appendix L)

There is a concentration of postgraduate numbers:

The concentration of research in terms of staffing, internal and external support is repeated when it comes to postgraduate numbers. A survey of 38 institutions reveals that just 13 institutions have 10 or more PhD students in the session 2005/6. (Appendix H)

The polarisation of language departments is illustrated in the following two comments:

‘An increase in external funding has led to more postgraduates than ever before’

(Professor, Department of German, Russell Group Institution)

‘Very few research students coming in. We have to create bursaries in order to encourage them’

(Senior Lecturer, School of Modern Languages, Non-Russell Group Institution)

Senior colleagues have expressed concern that the concentration of research students in a relatively small number of institutions will result in a narrowing of the range of types of postgraduate research conducted.

Some universities are focusing on more small-scale research

Relatively heavy teaching loads in universities with little external or internal research support have led to different types of research, often on a small scale. This has been particularly evident in research on Teaching and Learning, often conducted through action research, and through research into ICT based learning.

‘Universities in this category are aware that it is not possible to recruit high quality staff when no research culture exists, and some of the higher-profile new universities have worked to ensure that linguists are key players in research into technology-based learning’

(Head of Department, Non-Russell Group Institution)

Some modern languages staff are being redeployed into other disciplines

Research-active modern languages staff are being redeployed to other units, often in response to under-recruiting of students in languages, or to diminished prospects of RAE-related funding. There are examples of transfers to History, Politics, Communications, Comparative Literature, Area studies and Business studies. Concerns were expressed within the Senior Researchers’ Consultancy Group meetings about this trend: when these staff

retire they are generally not replaced by people with specialist language knowledge, and there is a loss of research capacity as a result. Also, such redeployments can destabilise the department left behind and weaken the link between teaching and research.

3.5 Research awareness

There is a high level of RAE-awareness in modern languages departments

Senior colleagues have suggested that there is not a high level of awareness of research funding opportunities in the EU Framework Programme 7 despite the fact that the programme is seeking interdisciplinary projects that embrace the humanities. There is, however, an awareness of the forthcoming RAE 2008, and this is reflected in strategic appointments which give research high priority.

‘We are very RAE2008 aware and this is having an impact on our research and in particular on our research appointments’

(Head of Department)

In Senior Researchers’ Consultancy Group meetings colleagues agreed that in order to encourage modern languages staff to undertake large-scale, collaborative work, research funding models need to be more accommodating to international research projects, as regards staffing, subject and working methods. The recent changes to the regulations for AHRC workshop and network programmes, facilitating greater international collaboration, have been welcomed by modern languages staff.

‘In order to encourage more ambitious projects, the research funding model needs to be more accommodating to international research projects, in terms of staffing, subject and working methods, for example ‘Contemporary European Cinema’

(Senior modern languages Academic)

Within Senior Researchers’ Consultancy Group meetings there was little enthusiasm for strategic funding of collaborative research on centrally determined topics. There was significantly more enthusiasm for responsive

funding of collaborative research on topics defined by the researchers themselves. This model was seen as essential for the production of innovative research.

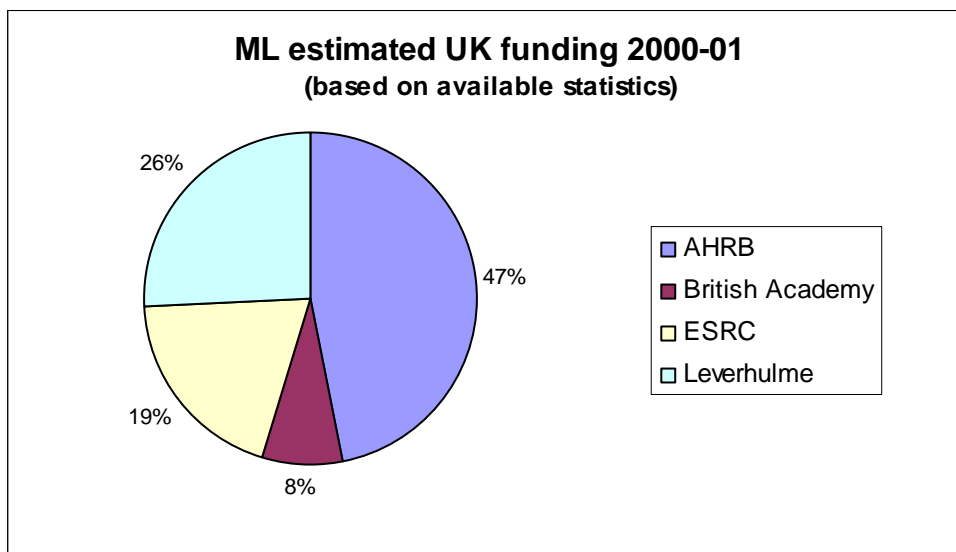
In 2000-1 non-AHRC funding represented more than half of externally funded modern languages research in the UK.

A significant proportion of modern languages research is funded by the British Academy, Leverhulme, ESRC and various overseas research agencies, for example the German Academic Exchange Service and the European Union.

The British Academy. According to British Academy records, in 1996 the number of small awards made to modern languages was 33. By 2000 this figure had doubled to 67 (Appendix J). The 67 small awards made to modern languages researchers in 1999/2000 represented something in the region of £180, 000 worth of funding. This increase is consistent with increases recorded for History and English, and small awards made overall.

The Leverhulme Trust. Modern languages as a discipline was underrepresented in the Leverhulme research grants made in 2001, receiving just 5% of awards compared with 27% for History and 16% for Archaeology.

The ESRC. In 2000-2001 the ESRC gave 3.9% of their funding to modern languages projects, equating to approximately £550, 000 or about 8 awards.



There is some evidence that modern languages researchers are reluctant to submit applications for major research grants

The relatively low level of modern languages applications to the AHRC Research Grant scheme, contrasted to the healthy take up of the Research Leave scheme reveals a reluctance to apply. Exploring the reasons for this,

senior colleagues consulted have suggested that they viewed the Research Grant scheme as not being ‘a good fit’ for proposed interdisciplinary research. They also felt that interdisciplinary proposals would be less likely to be successful. This latter point is borne out by AHRC figures which show that applications involving more than one panel have tended to be less successful.

Financial year	Success rate	
	Single Panel (5 only)	Multi-panel
2000	41.4%	37.87%
2001	43.0%	24.08%
2002	38.7%	23.94%
2003	40.0%	35.08%
2004	42.3%	30.48%
2005	47.1%	29.16%

AHRC, success rate of research applications in panel 5, 2000 – 2005

3.6 Research quality

There has been a significant rise in the quality of research between 1996 and 2001

In terms of research quality, as assessed in the last two RAEs (the 1992 RAE is omitted since it did not have the 5* rating that was available from 1996 onwards), there has been a strong upward trend in the number of units of assessment gaining the highest ratings (5 and 5*) even as the number of units submitted for assessment in six out of the nine areas relevant for Modern Languages fell. (Appendix K)

In 1996 64 out of a total of 289 Units of Assessments (22%) gained the highest ratings. In the 2001 RAE 114 out of a smaller total of 242 Unit of Assessments (47%) gained the highest ratings. Most of the individual panel reports for RAE 2001 confirm that there had been an improvement in the quality of research since the previous RAE.

Quotations from RAE 2001 panel reports:

‘there has been a commendable overall improvement in the quality of the research since 1996’ (Middle Eastern and African Studies, 46)

‘this time we were impressed by a number of studies of quite remarkable excellence’ (Asian Studies, 47)

‘institutions showed much greater sophistication in their research ... Higher rated units displayed evidence of substantial high-quality research’ (European Studies, 48)

‘there was a very significant rise in overall quality’ (French, 51)

there was a ‘discernible increase in high-quality research’ (German, 52)

evidence of ‘fine work being done in all areas’ (Italian, 53)

‘[we are] able to say with confidence that there has been a noticeable and very welcome improvement in the overall quality of the research submitted in 2001’, (Iberian and Latin American Languages, 55)

‘there has been a substantial rise in the standard of submissions ... substantial proportions of work recognised internationally as outstanding’ (Linguistics, 56)

PART FOUR

Trends in dissemination

Trends in dissemination have had a major effect on the form that research has taken over the last decade. External factors, such as promotion criteria, the RAE and increased funding for research time, have pushed certain types of dissemination to the fore. Whilst publishing a monograph remains essential for modern languages academics, the commercial interests of publishers have ensured that other forms of publication, for example textbooks, translations and co-authored or edited volumes, still have their place within the discipline. In the last few years, a growing number of UK-based journals have opened up new avenues of dissemination for further interdisciplinary and collaborative research and should continue to do so in the future. There are also increased opportunities to publish in another language and to take advantage of new methods of publication, such as on-line journals and CD-Rom.

4. 1 Institutional factors

The AHRC has made a positive contribution to dissemination of research.

The AHRC's funded research schemes have contributed strongly to promoting the publication of research outcomes. In particular, the research leave scheme provides additional research time and is designed to enable researchers to complete significant projects, often a book. The requirement to specify dissemination outcomes is an explicit factor in major research bids, and a major element in assessing the value for money in supporting a project. This has been reinforced by stronger reporting requirements, though where publications are a key outcome they may not appear for a considerable time after the manuscript is complete.

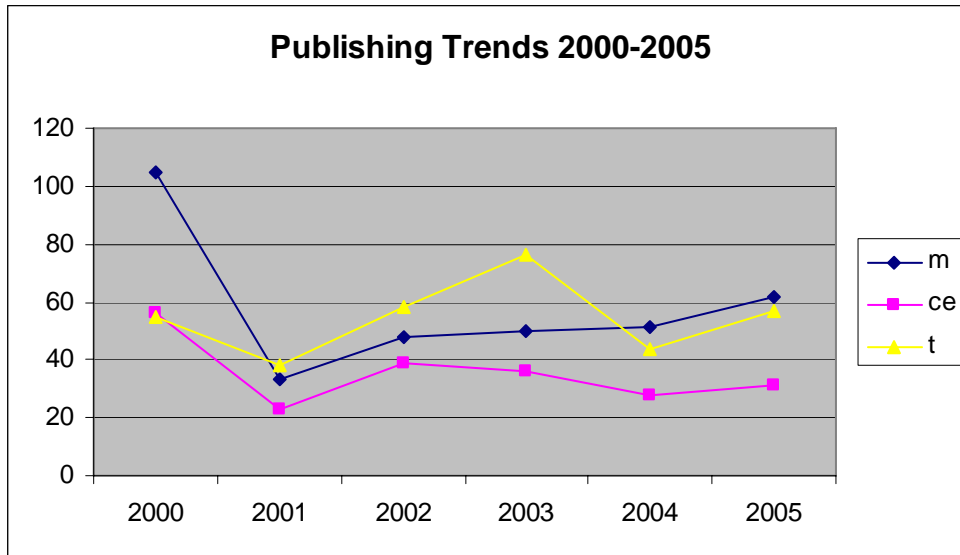
'The AHRC should consider offering subventions for publications. Publishers are now being used who would not have been used 10 years ago'

(Professor of German)

The RAE has made a broadly positive contribution to dissemination of research.

RAE has established strong incentives for academic staff to publish their research, and over the past ten years has given incentives to concentrate on a smaller quantity of high quality research outputs rather than a larger quantity

of less substantial items. It has provided a strong motivation for institutions to support researchers in bringing their work to publication, reflected in arrangements for additional leave, reduced teaching loads and in some cases direct subsidy to publishers. However, RAE has favoured certain types of publication, in particular monographs and articles in more prestigious journals, and its periodicity has caused difficulties with some longer-term projects. It has also produced a notable bunching of book publications in the period before RAE census dates.



Types of publications from modern languages academics, 2000 – 2005, monograph, co-authored/edited volume, textbook/translation (Appendix M)

This is very clear in the sharp fall in the number of published books after the peak in 2000: only one third as many monographs were published in the following year.

‘Special issues of journals/themed volumes attractive for disseminating cultural research; single author monographs still very important (to meet RAE 3*/4* aspirations). Overriding factor is achieving high quality in RAE terms’

(Head of Department)

‘Effective research dissemination is now for better or worse mainly driven by RAE objectives’

(Professor of German)

Academic appointment and promotion criteria favour publication of research.

The list of publications is commonly the leading factor in making academic appointments in research-led institutions. Frequently this is benchmarked against the likely evaluation in RAE terms. For research-led appointments at junior level, a demonstrated ability to achieve publication is increasingly important. In response, postgraduate research programmes increasingly provide support for students to achieve publication, for example in postgraduate journals and conference proceedings, and in departmental working papers. For appointments at senior level, a track record of high quality publications is generally required, usually including at least one recent or forthcoming monograph. Promotion schemes tend to use similar criteria, and in many cases an informal tariff is applied, in which the production of books plays a major role.

4.2 UK Journals

There are a growing number of UK-based journals covering modern languages research topics.

Several journals have been established since 1990. Examples include *The Bulletin of Francophone Africa*, *Central Europe Review*, *Hispanic Research Journal* and *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*. (Appendix N) Although these new journals cover a range of languages and topics, there has been a particular growth in Hispanic studies, with five journals devoted to studies in this area established since 1991. No journals are known to have closed during this period. There have been several instances of journals published by small organisations being taken up by larger publishers and made accessible to a wider audience: for example *Japan Forum* moved to Routledge in 1996, *French Cultural Studies* moved to Sage in 2003.

The growth in UK journals tends to be concentrated in the contemporary period.

Journals such as *Modern Italy* and *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* illustrate this trend. The increased focus on contemporary subjects reflects the applications for funding made by UK modern languages academics to the AHRC between 2000 and 2005, which showed an increase in interest in the twentieth century and contemporary periods (see 2.1)

New UK journals emphasise a cultural studies approach.

The subject of new journals also reflects the consistent interest in cultural studies shown by UK modern languages academics in their applications to the AHRC, 2000-2005, and illustrates this distinctive approach in the UK. Related to this, several of the journals established after 1990 have cinema as their focus, including *Studies in European Cinema*, *Studies in French Cinema* and *Studies in Hispanic Cinema*. Two forthcoming journals, *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*

and *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema*, both due in 2007, suggest that this focus is set to continue. This reflects the slight rise in the AHRC application figures which include a focus on cinema. (see 2.1)

There are informal understandings of esteem and impact factors.

Researchers generally have a sense of which journals they consider to be more prestigious and more widely read than others. However, this sense may differ considerably from one researcher to another, and there is no formal expression of a ranking in modern languages journals. The relative status of journals is not currently captured by metrical or more quantitative impact analysis in the UK, though there are US models of how this might be done. There is strong opposition to metrical approaches within the UK modern languages community, though some argue that their introduction may be inevitable, and that the modern languages community should try to make them more suitable to our area.

‘Certainly, peer-reviewed journals remain the gold standard, but good research is good research wherever it is published. Our European counterparts seem less bothered by this than we are’

(Head of Department)

4.3 UK publishers

There are disincentives to producing textbooks and translations.

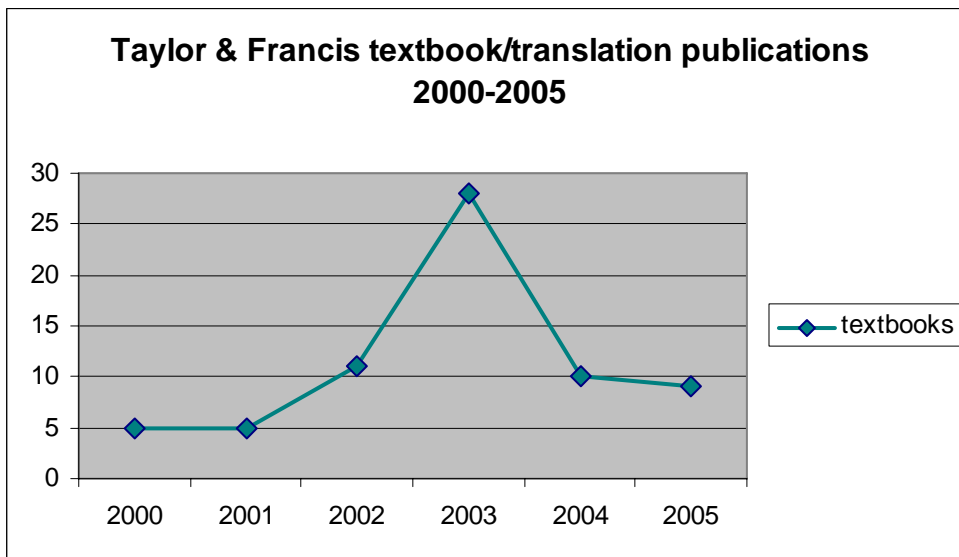
The criteria for RAE submissions, AHRC grants and career progression are widely interpreted to discount textbooks as research, since they involve the presentation of existing knowledge rather than the creation of new knowledge. Similarly, translations are regarded as the application of existing knowledge, which does not constitute research, though extensive critical apparatus and prefatory text may be regarded as research. Academic staff are often discouraged from undertaking either type of work. (Appendix M)

In spite of disincentives UK modern languages academics are still writing and publishing text books and translations.

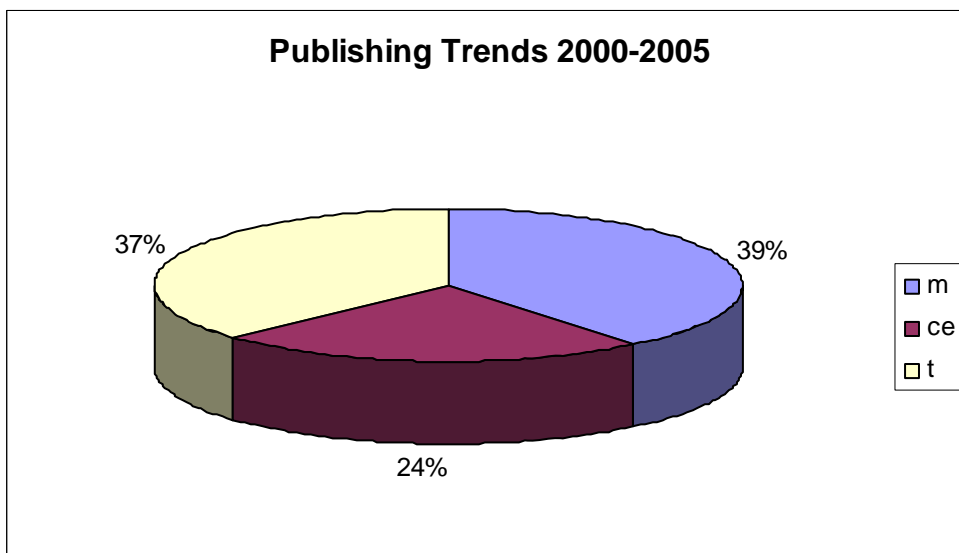
Publishers, as commercial enterprises, are keen to publish textbooks and translations aimed at a large potential audience of students. Academic staff are responding to this demand despite the disincentives. A survey of the number of books written by UK academics and published through UK-based publishers, shows similar numbers of text books and translations published in 2005 as were published in 2000 (Appendix M). Certain publishers, for example the Taylor & Francis Group and Oxford University Press, publish markedly more textbooks and translations than other publishers.

Taylor & Francis for example, published the largest number of textbooks/translations over the six year period, producing an especially large

number of new textbooks, particularly glossaries, grammar books and annotated translations during 2003.



Over a six year period, UK presses published almost the same number of text books and translations as the number of monographs. There are disincentives in the relative lack of esteem for textbooks and translations, though in many cases these may be overcome by a commitment to producing good course materials, by access to a wider audience and, in some cases, by financial benefits.



Percentages of modern languages books by type, monograph, co-authored/edited volume, textbook/translation, 2000 – 2005 (Appendix M)

The publication of conference proceedings has greatly declined.

UK publishers are more reluctant now to publish conference proceedings, since these are likely to command a small audience. Some publishers continue to publish conference proceedings, including Peter Lang, Maney and the University of Durham's Modern Language Series. To some extent this area is being taken up by special issues of journals. There is a perception that proceedings are still published in other countries, such as Spain, France and the United States.

'The Italianist has published conference proceedings for fifteen years ... proceedings will also be sent to Legenda and Macmillan'

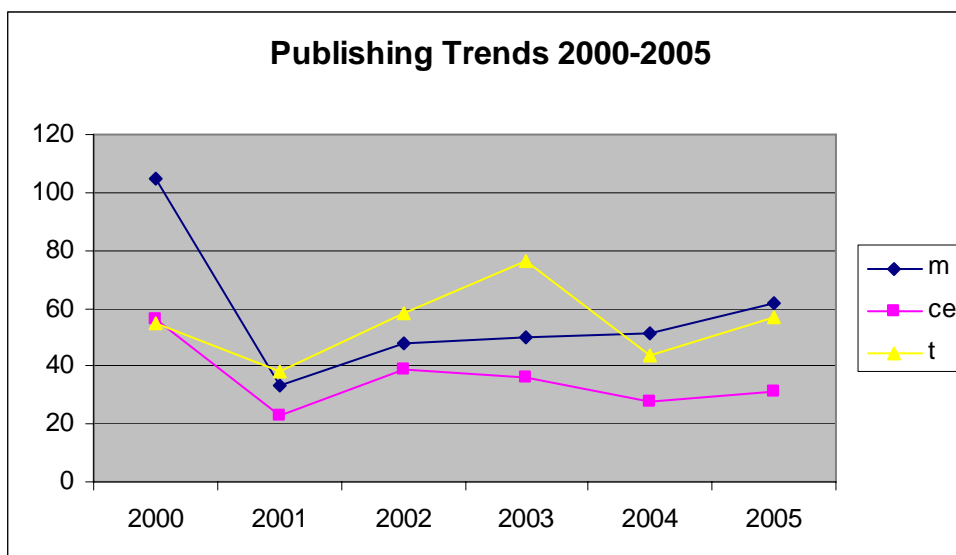
(Professor, Italian Studies)

There has been a decrease in the number of collaborative works.

The number of collaborative works published in the UK by academics in modern languages decreased between 2000 and 2005. It is felt that the institutional incentives (RAE, AHRC, promotion) tend to favour single author and single subject publications. UK modern languages academics are to some extent discouraged from producing co-authored or edited volumes. The market for glossaries, encyclopaedias and companions, which flourished in the 1990s, appears to have diminished. At the same time, some researchers point out that it is more feasible to produce edited collections than to find time for the more sustained reflection required for a full-length monograph. This is a particular factor in post-92 institutions, where researchers often have higher teaching loads and less access to sabbatical or other research leave. New drives towards interdisciplinarity and collaborative projects highlighted in 3.3 and popular with younger modern languages academics, coupled with predicted increasing teaching loads, may result in an upward trend in the publication of collaborative works in the future.

The number of monographs has increased.

The factors working against collaborative publications have favoured the production of monographs. The figures from UK publishers show that more monographs are being produced each year, and that following the sharp decline after the RAE year 2000, numbers of monographs published by UK academics rose slowly over the period 2001 to 2005, suggesting that publishing monographs is becoming increasingly important for UK modern languages academics.

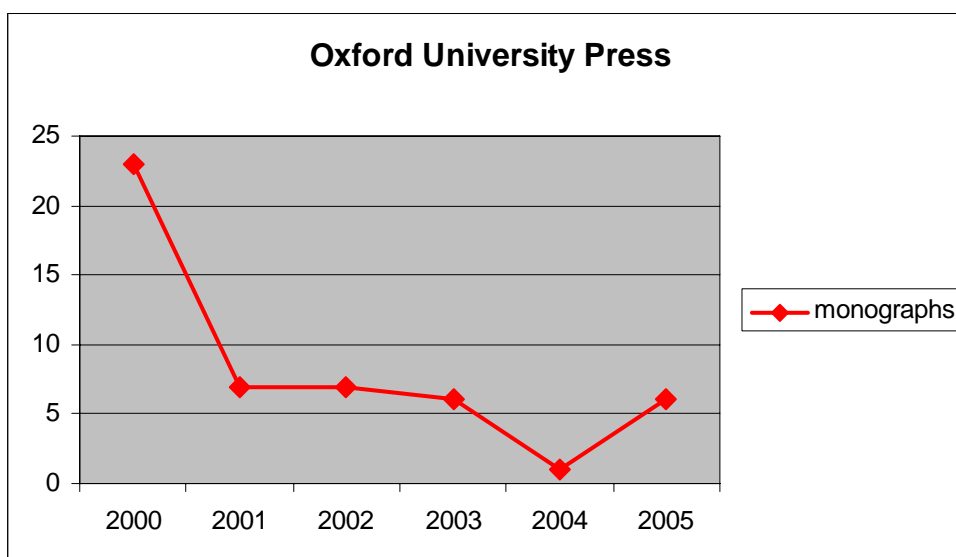


Types of publications from modern languages academics, 2000 – 2005, monograph, co-authored/edited volume, textbook/translation (Appendix M)

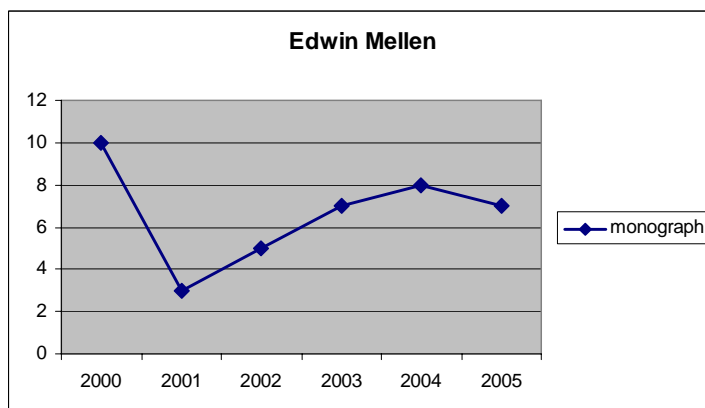
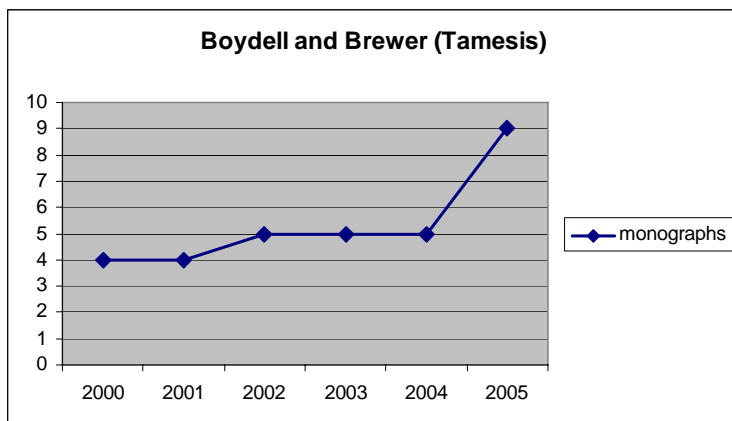
The general trend within UK publishers over the last five years was a rise in the number of monographs being produced each year, from 33 published in 2001 to 62 in 2005. The ‘spike’ of 2000, with a large number of monographs published by UK modern languages academics (105) reflects the importance of the monograph to the RAE process. (Appendix M) It is to be expected that a similar ‘spike’ will occur in 2006/7.

Monographs are moving from large UK presses to smaller presses.

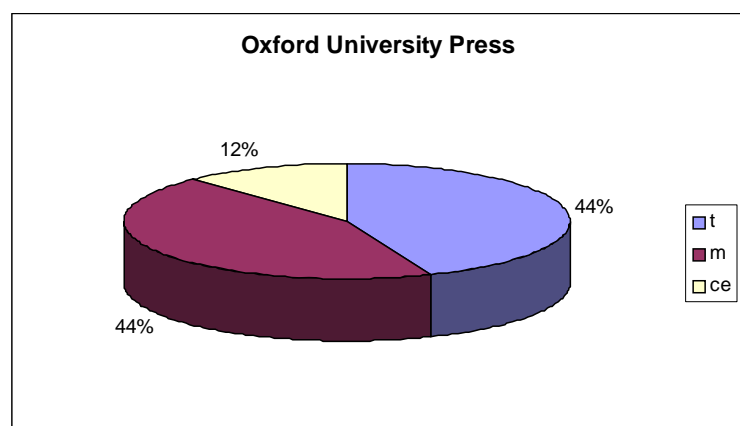
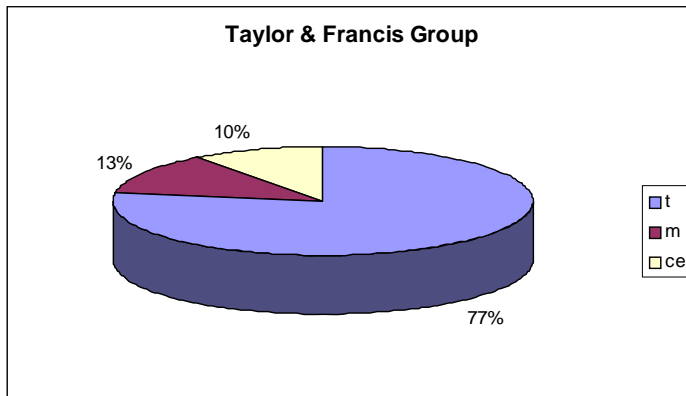
Publication figures from UK presses indicate that certain UK publishers are producing fewer monographs by UK academics. For example, the largest modern languages publisher, Oxford University Press, shows a sharp fall in monograph publications in 2001, from which the numbers have not recovered.



This decline is offset by smaller presses producing more. For example Boydell and Brewer and Edwin Mellen both show a steady rise after the sharp decrease in 2001.



This trend may reflect the commercial concerns of larger publishers; preferring textbooks which can be targeted at larger international markets. For example, the second largest modern languages publisher, Taylor & Francis Group, devoted 77% of their modern languages publications between 2000 and 2005 to textbooks and translations. From Oxford University Press, just 44% of their publications over the same period were textbooks or translations, the same percentage as their monographs. (Appendix M)



An increasing number of publishers are requiring subsidies.

Unlike the natural sciences, where journals make significant charges for publication, the culture in modern languages did not include individual subsidies until the mid-1990s, when companies such as Peter Lang (head office in Switzerland) introduced the practice. This arrangement is common in other European countries, and has been taken up by a number of UK publishers, including John Benjamin; Maney, Boydell and Brewer, Edwin Mellen and Durham University Press. Edwin Mellen is the principal commercial publisher of UK PhD theses. Subvention-led, it is less dependent on large sales; their monographs are expensive and target libraries.

‘Far more publishers even reputable publishing houses (especially in Germany, France, Switzerland etc but also in the UK) are now asking academics to contribute up front to some of the publication expenses.’

(Head of Departments)

‘The print run for a specialist topic might be as low as 250, 50 of which are set aside for review copies, copyright libraries etc.’

(Commissioning editor).

There has been little or no expansion of modern languages publications by university presses.

Some UK university presses have their own modern languages series, for example the Manchester University Press’s Spanish and Latin American Studies series, or the Modern Languages Series produced by the University of Durham, which is currently expanding to include Arabic titles, as well as the Hispanic, French, German and Slavonic titles it currently publishes. Edinburgh University Press has maintained a consistent level of publications since 2000, and has increased its publication of textbooks and translations by UK modern languages academics over the last five years. Birmingham University Press was sold to Continuum International Publishing Group Limited in 2005, and during that year they published no books by UK modern languages academics and only 2 in the previous year. Neither Liverpool nor Manchester University Presses have shown signs of further expansion in the area of modern languages studies during the last five years.

‘The MHRA has established new publishing ventures in association with Maney Publishing over the last 5 years. They often publish material that larger commercial presses will not. The downside is that larger commercial bookshops do not stock these titles - they have to be ordered and often via the publisher themselves. As such they are not as widely promoted outside of academia and do not sell many copies and perhaps contribute to the idea that research in certain areas is declining.’ (Bookshop proprietor)

‘Boydell & Brewer are founding another language list in medieval French to see whether the withdrawal of other publishers from French has opened up an area of opportunity.’

(Commissioning editor)

4.4 Non-UK Publishers

More research is being published in other European countries.

A larger proportion of specialized and foreign language material is being published in the foreign country. Though it is difficult to quantify, there is a strong perception that researchers are having their books published in

English by publishers in the Netherlands (Rodopi, Mouton de Gruyter, Benjamin) and Switzerland (Peter Lang). In addition, many researchers are publishing in the relevant foreign language with presses based in the country of study. This has been noted in French, German, Spanish and Italian in particular. However, it may be more difficult to publish theoretically oriented work outside US and UK.

‘Instituto Internacional de Lit. Americana in the US publishes occasional monographs: a few a year. Iberoamericana in Germany (now also in Madrid) has become very active in the last few years and is now a big new player’.

(Bookshop proprietor)

‘Large sections of research (in particular by German researchers working in the UK) are published in Germany, making German publishers and journals a highly important outlet of UK research in German Studies while at the same time ensuring the participation of UK research(ers) in German academic debates. This is also due to the UK and US publishers' reduced interest in the publication of scholarly monographs, which i) force UK researchers to publish in Germany/Austria/Switzerland with publishers who aim at an international market (Peter Lang, de Gruyter, Niemeyer etc.), and ii) may shift the balance towards articles in peer reviewed journals.’

(Head of German Department)

‘I am confronted with the problem of finding publishers for my work. I feel that there are very few real academic publishers left in the UK. For example CUP asked me to remove Sweden from my book *Language and National Identity: Comparing France and Sweden* which was eventually published by a Dutch/American publisher’

(Delphi participant)

The use of foreign languages is often discouraged by publishers.

It is frequently a requirement that all material in a foreign language must be translated for publications in the US and other monolingual English-speaking markets.

‘We agree that the importance of US and other monolingual Anglophone markets has discouraged the use of foreign languages in publications. There is no way that we can change this trend but we need to ensure that institutions such as the funding bodies HEFCE (through the RAE) etc. do acknowledge that publication in other languages is important in reaching a wider audience’

(Senior researcher)

4.5 On-Line Publishing

There has been growth in online journals.

The growth has mainly come from print journals being made available online. For example the majority of OUP, Taylor Francis, Sage and Blackwell journal publications are now available to be consulted in whole or in part online. But new journals are emerging which are exclusively online, for example *Central Europe Review* www.tol.cz/look/TOL/rdrculture.tpl, *Edinburgh Journal of Gadda Studies* <http://www.arts.ed.ac.uk/italian/gadda/> and *German as a foreign language* <http://gfl-journal.com>. Rigorous refereeing is seen as key to their being accepted, and journals are keen to outline their refereeing process on their webpages. For example, *Language Learning and Technology* provides a detailed explanation of the two-stage refereeing process involving the editors and 2-3 external reviewers <http://llt.msu.edu/contrib.htm> modern languages .

‘Electronic journals are increasing in prominence, though without displacing major journals publishing in print and electronic form. The participation of senior academics in editorial activities is under threat by RAE driven demands for personal output; similarly the production of tools such as bibliographies and translations remains undervalued’

(Head of Department)

‘The drive towards open-access online journals is less urgent in Humanities as the shelf life of materials here tends to be longer’

(Professor of Italian)

There is growing use of non-traditional forms of output.

In addition to online journals, there has been an increase in the use of non-traditional outputs, especially in web-based and CD-Rom publications. It may be too early to evaluate their scope and impact, though there are some online

editions of less well known authors, whose work might not be made available in print (e.g. the work of Karl Gutzkow). Most of the larger publishers, for example OUP, Blackwells, Taylor Francis and CUP, have produced modern languages CD-Roms or digital publications over the last five years. Within OUP and CUP, for example, these publications have mostly been dictionaries, glossaries, guides to pronunciation or language learning products. Edinburgh University Press have produced a series of digital publications since 2000, although these are digitised versions of material which is available in print form. CD-Roms reduce delays and costs so are becoming increasingly popular for conference proceedings, which it is becoming harder to publish elsewhere. Conference abstracts, by contrast, are now routinely delivered online. More ambitious projects have been developed, for example, at Oxford Brookes, including a hypertext website on French fairgrounds, a virtual library for theatre studies, and the CESAR Database of French Theatre in the 17th and 18th centuries.

‘Online publication allows publication to take place speedily; it allows the developing world to have cheap (and sometimes free) access to data and scholarship; virtual libraries overcome the problems of maintaining book collections in the Tropics’

(Head of School)

‘Electronic publications (especially arising from conferences) are becoming more widely accepted and an article on a website may not necessarily be published in hard copy. There is some evidence of strategic institutional encouragement of electronic publishing partly with citations in mind to secure a wider audience’

(Head of Department)

‘The traditional and still not unusual delay of anything up to a couple of years from completion of article to dissemination and response looks increasingly anachronistic’

(Head of Department)

Online communication is an increasingly important form of discussion.

The growth of email lists and bulletin boards has had a strong impact on academic discussion in languages, as in other disciplines. They have become a major form of dissemination, and frequently include the publication of book reviews.

‘Apart from formal collaborative projects there is a very significant intensification at least in some areas of informal networks of collaboration, through e mail lists and web sites for exchange of ideas, irrespective of publication or of project 'ownership'.’

(Head of Department)

Conclusion

Looking to the future

Paradoxically, research in modern languages is thriving.

Despite the national crisis in language education, research in modern languages is strikingly buoyant. This may appear to be a paradox. The decline in language learning in secondary schools is amply documented, most recently in the Dearing Review of language education. The number of students applying for undergraduate programmes has declined consistently over the last ten years and has only recently begun to show signs of recovery. Yet against this unpromising backdrop, the evidence is very clear that research has continued to thrive. There are several reasons why this has happened. A first reason is that, faced with falling student enrolments, staff in languages in the UK have been spurred to innovate. They have developed imaginative new courses, reflected in a parallel invigoration of their research directions. A second reason is that the funding of research has become less dependent on the teaching base. There has been a sharp increase in selective funding based on research quality (QR) and in competitive funding from research councils, including the AHRC, and from other research funding bodies. A third reason is that research has increasingly become concentrated in a smaller number of institutions, with a greater critical mass of researchers and stronger research environments. This concentration has, however, reduced the diversity of institutions pursuing research and may be a long-term threat to innovation.

The principal route for knowledge transfer will continue to be through teaching and publication.

The main vehicles by which knowledge is transferred to external recipients are through the teaching of undergraduates and postgraduates who will subsequently enter employment, and through the publication of research which may find some readers outside the academic community. There has been limited take up in modern languages of initiatives such as knowledge transfer partnerships, aimed at transferring knowledge from universities to external organisations. A small number of scholars have developed cooperation with industry, especially in the areas of translation, interpreting and language teaching. And a number of modern languages scholars have responded to requests for participation in the press and broadcast media. It is likely that there will be a small increase in forms of knowledge transfer other than teaching and publication, mainly in response to external demand, government policy and targeted funding initiatives.

Approaches using ICT methodologies and resources are likely to grow slowly in the absence of further substantial investment.

Modern languages researchers use all the generic tools of communication technology for data collection, access to reference sources, reference

management, discussion and dissemination. The application of ITC-based analytical tools has developed significantly in resource enhancement, in research on language-learning and in corpus linguistics, but is relatively infrequent outside these areas. With the growth of technical support services in universities and the emergence of analytical tools suitable for humanities applications, it is likely that there will be some growth in the use of ICT methodologies. The use of online research resources will continue to develop. But the development of resources specific to modern languages is likely to remain slow in the UK, constrained by resourcing, capacity and copyright issues. There will be a continued increase in the use of digital libraries and archives, especially those produced in-country.

I can only think of a handful of online resources produced in the UK. Most of the resources in French studies are produced in France (often by government agencies), in the US (usually by the big universities) and in French-speaking Canada. FRANTEXT, the Franco-American database of around 2000 French texts is used by a small number of scholars here, and access is restricted to subscribing institutions'

(Senior researcher in French)

Collaborative research will continue to grow.

Modern languages scholars working in historical, socio-political, linguistic and ICT-oriented fields are more attracted to larger collective projects. Their numbers are growing, even if they are likely to remain a minority in most of the large pre-1992 universities for some time. A new generation of postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers is being formed in collaborative projects, and it is likely that they will continue this mode of research in their later careers. Collaborative projects normally depend on short-term external funding, typically three years, and their continuation is difficult to sustain within departmental budgets. Principal investigators spend an increasing amount of time managing the research of a team, and seeking further funding, which is often felt to reduce their own research activity. However, many universities are developing stronger research support services, encouraging larger bids and offsetting the administrative load on academic staff. The recognition of full economic costs by the AHRC is a significant incentive to collaborate in more ambitious projects.

Individual research will remain the dominant mode of research in modern languages.

Individual research is the most widespread mode in modern languages, as is evidenced by the relatively high level of take up of the AHRC leave scheme as opposed to the large grants scheme. This predominance is academically grounded in the literary and critical traditions, which typically depend on close reading and critical analysis of a limited range of texts, rather than the collection of large amounts of data. It is reinforced by the large number of

researchers who may be the only representative of their own area of research specialisation within their institution. It is misleading, however, to refer to this as the 'lone scholar' model, since individual researchers are usually active in the discussion and exchange of ideas across the research community in their field.

Modern languages research will be further concentrated in fewer universities.

In addition to the changing pattern of student recruitments, the mechanisms of research support and institutional strategy will contribute to focusing modern languages research in a smaller number of universities. The RAE has intensified the market for research staff, with the result that the most active researchers are being drawn to the larger departments, mainly in pre-1992 universities. The increased differential in QR funding has channelled resources towards the most highly rated departments. The availability of large research grants has created opportunities for further growth in universities which have well established researchers, a critical mass of staff and the infrastructure to support them. And a growing number of institutions are taking the strategic view that they will focus on a narrower profile of subject areas, with the result that several have decided to withdraw from degree level teaching, and therefore research, in modern languages.

'This year's French studies conference had an amazingly optimistic atmosphere, with a real buzz about research in French. But there were only two people there from the new universities, and one of them had just got a job at an old university'

(Senior researcher in French)

Increased concentration will reduce diversity and innovation.

With significantly fewer modern languages departments, research will take place in a narrower range of institutional contexts. This inevitably reduces the diversity of research environments and will therefore reduce the range of contexts within which innovations can develop. Many, though by no means all, of the innovations of the last thirty years were first developed in the former polytechnic sector and the technological universities. In future, the sources of innovation will be located in a smaller range of institutions, with a strong onus resting with the Russell Group and other institutions who have maintained strong modern languages departments.

Increased concentration will create a richer research environment in some institutions.

The most successful modern languages departments enjoy significant support from their institutions, which is reinforced by the greater access to resources

from funding councils and research councils. This has fostered conditions in which postgraduate, early career and more experienced modern languages researchers can generate high-quality research. The intensification of this process is likely to lead to the further strengthening of research culture in successful departments and the production of more high-quality research.

Modern languages will maintain its overall research capability.

The statistics suggest that there may have been a modest growth in the numbers of researchers in modern languages over the last five years. The continuing increase in research funding makes it likely this will continue in the immediate future. The great majority of researchers are also teachers, and there is some concern that the sharp fall in languages at GCSE and A level will be reflected in reduced student numbers in universities. The evidence is that in recent years the decline has affected post-1992 universities most severely, while Russell Group universities have maintained or increased student numbers. The overall effect has been to reinforce the concentration of language studies and therefore research in modern languages. It seems likely that this will continue, with the result that overall research capability in modern languages will be maintained, though across fewer institutions.

‘Modern languages research in the UK is stronger internationally than it was 15 years ago, more exciting, and of good – in some cases, excellent – quality, but increasingly concentrated in large research institutions. While this facilitates a clearer focus and economies of scale, these large institutions are not necessarily where the more radical research agendas have been pursued in the past’

(Professor of Hispanic studies)