



British Association of Film,
Television and Screen Studies

Production Studies: Film, Television, and their Industrial Contexts – Conference Report

On Wednesday 15th June 2016, postgraduate researchers from the Cinema and Television History (CATH) Research Centre at De Montfort University, Leicester, held a one-day conference entitled 'Production Studies: Film, Television, and their Industrial Contexts'. The event, aimed at postgraduates and early career researchers, attracted 23 speakers and over 50 delegates, plus our invited keynote speaker and our roundtable of three industry panellists.

Production studies is a thriving area of film, television and media scholarship at present, as evidenced by recent groundbreaking publications such as *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries* (2009) and its follow-up *Production Studies, the Sequel!: Cultural Studies of Global Media Industries* (2015). It is a field that unites many postgraduates in the CATH Centre, and it was our aim to provide a space for other PhD students and ECRs to contribute to the growing discipline and to connect with other scholars.

The day began with a keynote lecture by Dr. Bridget Conor, co-editor of *Production Studies, the Sequel!*, whose emphasis on the importance of understanding contexts of labour and production laid an inspiring framework for the day. She drew in particular on her experiences with New Zealand's media industries and her research on *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*.

The bulk of the day consisted of parallel panels, divided into pertinent themes such as the role of women in film and TV production, national production contexts, and the lives of production workers. The conference featured a range of speakers from countries around the globe, including Australia, China, Switzerland and the Czech Republic.

One distinguishing feature of the conference was the industry roundtable which took place at the close of proceedings. The roundtable consisted of three production workers within the media industries: B Jones, a CG generalist; David Mounfield, a writer and actor; and Will Jewell, a writer and director. We felt it vital to host this roundtable in order to illuminate the real lived experiences of production workers in film and television, with the belief that a greater understanding of these experiences will enrich and underpin the scholarly work undertaken in film and television studies, bridging the gap between scholarly thought and the realities of labour and production.

This hour-long roundtable, chaired by Professor Ian Hunter (deputy director of the CATH Centre), took the form of a Q&A that stimulated a diverse range of questions from our delegates. Topics of discussion included the instability of contracted work in below-the-line positions, the interaction between workers within different departments, and the experience of working on franchise productions.

All conference delegates received individual packs, programmes, stationery and other ephemera to assist them at the event, and a buffet lunch was also provided.

Vitaly, we were able to offer the conference as a free event after being awarded BAFTSS funding. We found that waiving the registration fees was a significant factor in enabling delegates – particularly non-speaking – to attend our conference, which greatly enhanced the varied and rigorous discussions throughout the day. The lack of cost also enabled a number of researchers from the University of Leicester to join us, as well as academic staff at De Montfort University from other departments and faculties, strengthening our inter-disciplinary and inter-university ties.

Funding

The £250.00 BAFTSS funding provided fee waivers for all conference attendees. We considered offering bursaries to speaking delegates, but decided that a conference-wide fee waiver would provide the greatest opportunities to enrich the event, creating an incentive for local and non-speaking researchers to attend.

We found that, subsequent to advertising the event as a no-cost conference thanks to BAFTSS funding, we almost doubled our registered attendees and eventually hosted over 50 people at the conference. This enriched the scholarly environment and gave further opportunities for networking.

The £250.00 funding from BAFTSS was invested back into the conference in its entirety, covering a portion of the increased catering and printing costs due to higher delegate numbers than initially anticipated.

Without this funding and support from BAFTSS, we would not have been able to reach out to as many delegates from around the world and would have struggled to provide the optimum experience for all our attendees.