

## Section 2 - Financial Details

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### Total received to date

Please state the total amount paid to date by the British Academy

£7,452.67

### Travel and Subsistence Costs

Please state expenditure on travel and subsistence

£125.96

### Accommodation

Please state expenditure on accommodation

£123.53

### Consumables

Please state expenditure on consumables

£397.85

### Research/Clerical Assistance

Please state expenditure on Research or Clerical Assistance

£6,204.43

### Other Costs

Please state expenditure on any other costs not already accounted for

£600.90

### Over/underspend

Please explain your reasons for any over/underspend

The aims of the project were met with the amount spent.

We overspent on Research/Clerical as we were not able to engaged one single person in this role but engaged several different people. Each made a different specialist contribution according to the developing needs of the research activity in each workshop.

There was an underspend of £2159 as University of Salford internal funds were used as match funding towards travel for the presentation at the International Society for Humour Studies Conference in Tallinn Estonia. There were sufficient funds to pay for travel but these were already allocated for a different column in the budget and the amount of vire would have been unreasonable.

### Total Unspent Funds

If the grant was underspent, please state here the total value of the refund expected to be returned to the British Academy

£2,159.00

## Section 3 - Research Results

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## Title of research project

### Please provide the title of your award

Modelling interactive clown practices for virtual game design applications in dementia care

## Project website

### If you have one please enter it here

<https://rtalbot9.wixsite.com/ludicresearch/clown-hotel>

## Start date of research

### Please select

31 May 2016

## End date of research

### Please select

31 October 2018

## Account of research carried out

The research, undertaken in the form of creative practice-research and supported by complementary reflection, investigated approaches to Elder Clown interaction that could be applied in virtual environments and online platforms on hardware available to people in their own homes. Workshops for clowning and nursing practitioners tested approaches with appropriate digital media, before dissemination of prototypes amongst professional carers, people living at home with a diagnosis of dementia, and groups of users of independent social services at dementia cafés.

### Laboratory 1

The first laboratory explored 'Clown Performances To Clown Interventions', surveying clowning practices and positioning the research in a lineage of hospital and Elder Clown, before considering in virtual contexts and digital media. With a leading, experienced clown practitioner, Ian Cameron, Talbot and Clare Dormann, a games design specialist re-considered clowning approaches that had been developed in performance interactions with people with advanced dementia who were resident in care homes in Scotland, as part of a study led by the University of Stirling in collaboration with the arts organisation Hearts & Minds (Edinburgh).

The two-day laboratory reconfigured performance exercises for screen interaction. Attendant discussions considered ethical issues around devising online 'Theatres of Engagement' (Lavender, 2017) for participants with diminished cognition. Practitioners and researchers (from Edge Hill University, Brunel University and Birmingham University, and students of performance from the University of Salford worked with Talbot, Dormann and Cameron. In this workshops were the beginnings of production of memes, scripts and simple interactions around domestic themes (folding sheets, dressing) and personal life-events (meeting, greeting, getting married). Time-constrained sketches emerged as a form of visual 'joke', as did slapstick performance without words. A dialogue with Arthur Pedlar, a senior clown practitioner, still practising and teaching internationally in his 80s, brought these sketches into the context of simple clown slapstick seen at the Blackpool Tower circus and in classic sketches from the French circus, familiar to Pedlar. The meeting informed the tone of interaction with the target audience and specific cultural references.

### Laboratory 2

The second laboratory phase included an interim workshop on dialogue and interaction methods. Barnaby King, who has collaborated with Richard Talbot on online clown performance in the past worked with

Talbot and Dormann to develop principles from Laboratory 1 and apply them to simple game formats. The games were first presented in a rudimentary format as a live 'offer' at the Dementia Café of Salford Institute for Dementia, and then re-devised for video. A game based on swapping hats was influenced by a classic Tommy Cooper sketch and storytelling exercises for people with dementia developed by Storybox in Manchester. This new game was edited using a split screen and this layout was taken on into a further laboratory and live performance for a community café at Aspire's Humphrey Booth Resource Centre in Swinton. The game was further reconfigured and documented as a live game interaction that might be played via Skype.

### Laboratory 3

The next laboratory explored online and 'virtual' performance and engagement techniques and technologies. Further scripts were developed from improvisations. A section of the laboratory involved working with Jo Scott (University of Salford) to develop aesthetic principles and it was here that the idea of a hotel as a suitable framework emerged. The hotel offered spaces, rooms, in which to locate different domestic themes and practices - sleeping, cleaning, watching TV). Furthermore these spaces might be personalised for individual 'players'. With Barnaby King and students of Physical Theatre at Edge Hill University we explored ludic and playful narrative devising methods and the scope for responsiveness in the prototype that we were creating, following contemporary performance research. We had not decided on which platform (an app or an iBook? and which hardware (iPad? online TV? computer? Skype? Zoom?) to use. Meanwhile the characteristics and interactive 'schtick' of the clowns as hosts of the game was practised in a more competitive format for two live presentations - one at Humphrey Booth Resource Centre and one at Nursing Symposium that included a performance by a performer with Alzheimer's disease and for a small audience of people with relatively established dementia conditions.

The visits to care homes and community centres continually revise the format of interaction and conceptual designs with staff, people living with dementia and caregivers. Feedback included documented interviews, although in some cases contributors who are caregivers did not want to be recorded, and who wanted to remain anonymous.

### Laboratory 3

Laboratory 3 focussed on virtual Clowning through telematic performance methods, testing the possibilities of the clowning and play principle of complicité while performers and participants are located in different spaces, as they would be on Skype or Zoom. We established that our target audience of people with a recent diagnosis, living at home, would most likely interact as a pair, with no more than two clowns at a time. This involved a series of interactions involving performers Clown performer Alice Robinson (Clown Lab), and student of clowning Harry Mansuell (Bolton University), Dancer Sarah Lockwood (University of Salford) and her dance student, Ashley Shorrock from Burnley College.

This produced a number of transcripts of dialogue, performances and scenes leading to digital design exercises with Dr Umran Ali (University of Salford, Senior Lecturer in Creative Media) with the intention of evolving a design environment for the prototype. An initial version used existing set designs that faithfully recreated the Fawlty Towers (BBC TV, 1975-79) set. We are still trying to secure copyright to use these environments, which are copyrighted by an American university in partnership with a broadcast company.

The workshops for clowning practitioners continued with a master class to disseminate principles of stillness, and affective interaction, as part of the Circus Symposium (celebrating the 250th anniversary of the Circus in 2018).

### Laboratory 4

Laboratory 4 took place in March 2018 and investigated computer programming requirements, databased, bespoke design of the online game environment and options for the user interface. In the prototype these remain very rudimentary, but we considered FTP protocols, and database software and attempted user pathway mapping to facilitate users' visits and return visits to the prototype. In the interim we began to

collect playlists and extant archive databases - Youtube Playlists for example and curated material for our target user, in consultation with test groups. Gaps in the prototype narrative and user-flow were explored and further training for performers working in this context was provided. We then designed the iBook graphic and hyperlinks This was then tested with smaller focus groups of consultants, people living with dementia and caregivers and the results documented online.

## **Advances in knowledge or understanding**

**Please indicate here any advances in knowledge or understanding result from the research..**

'Elder Clowning', is a distinctive form of clowning that is a quieter mode of interaction that aims to facilitate wellbeing through gentle provocation through songs, laughter, and skits, non-verbal play and memory stimuli and jokes. Elder Clowns also wear vintage clothing to evoke memory and association and interactions and explore themes such fashion, weddings, children and childhood and family relations.

The practice-research methodology was original and developed new approaches to Elder Clowning and to interaction with focus groups by combining live performance, academic presentation, and prototype testing. The prototype can be applied via an iPad as a form of entertainment and allows for the possibility of informal archiving of playlists by people in the comfort of their own homes. The online interactive potentials (Skype) of the iBook provide a new link between people living at home and professional performers, as well as with their network of caregivers and brings them closer to friends in daycare community centres and cafes. The iBook prototype also provides a mobile personal archive and site for ad hoc interaction, as well as being a conversation piece and affective stimulus. In this way it may also be a supplementary therapy for hospital and residential care provision, as people bring the tool with them into residential care.

We propose this as a form of tele-health care or in-home entertainment potentially as part of project-based therapies that include live performance, digital technology and virtual interaction. The iBook, then, is a new elementary game inviting engagement with the figure of the clown, presented for the first time as a hapless figure requiring advice and instruction from people who may feel that their potential contribution and value is diminishing. Through simple games and interactions in the iBook we offer cognitive exercises and can draw on self-curated cultural memories (from 1960s and 70s TV and music for instance). We turn a process of cognitive 'training' into a game; and we facilitate interactions between caregivers and people living with dementia using the appropriately comical and abstracted figure of the clown. There are many dementias and an array of reactions to clowns, but the figure introduces a world of incongruity, absurd and semiotic play that is apt for many dementia conditions. The emphasis on interaction is not on cognitive 'testing' but on the recognition of 'offers' from that gradually emerge from users. Following the Canadian researcher into Elder Clowning, Pia Kontos, the emphasis in our work has been on developing affective playful and sympathetic encounters, but here in a hybrid set of performance environments, both live and online. The performances and laboratories in which participants, such as social workers, or carers were involved were opportunities for participants and performers to connect and to focus on the pleasures of incongruity, coincidence, and chance encounter. This is allied to an idea of ludic and aleatory play that forms part of 'affective attunement' promoted by such as Kontos and Australian scholar Michael Balfour (2017). In dialogue with people living with dementia this attunement is sought via clown practices that acknowledge and accommodate error and dissonance. These are not regarded as problematic, but as opportunities for playful and meaningful interaction.

## **Section 4 - Publications and Dissemination**

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### **Lay Summary of project's achievements for communication to public**

**Please provide an overall summary of the project's achievements in non-specialist language suitable for inclusion on the Academy's website.**

Through a series of creative laboratories a group of clowning practitioners, games designers and digital media specialists have developed a prototype Clown Hotel in an interactive iBook. The iBook introduces 'readers' to clownish hotel staff who are looking for advice and guidance from 'readers'. The iBook introduces spaces (rooms) for informal cultural archive, to be curated by individuals at home. The iBook contains entertaining videos as well as online playlists of music and films. The stories and activities contained within the hotel are suitable for people living with a diagnosis of dementia and their caregivers, featuring scenes in the hotel ballroom and tearoom for example. The iBook extends established 'Elder Clown' techniques and brings them to a new audience. The use of the iBook, presented on iPads, has brought therapeutic clown performance into a new environment, online and can be enjoyed by families as well as people living at home with dementia. We have produced a prototype of the iBook and conducted small scale testing with audiences in Greater Manchester and Cumbria. We intend to develop the iBook and the live performances and online interactions associated with it, in the future.

## Media Interest

**Please indicate if any media interest was expressed in your research**

*No Response*

## Audiences

**Please briefly describe any non-academic audiences to which your research was relevant..**

Based on responses so far, we believe that the iBook will be enjoyed by a diverse audience for whom dementia is a daily concern - from people with early onset dementia who enjoy digital technologies, to older people still able to live at home, and to regular users of dementia cafes and clubs organised by social services. The research process has also engaged clown practitioners and run workshops to offer training in interaction techniques suitable for this audience.

Specifically, we visited groups associated with the Aspire social service agency at Humphrey Booth Resource Centre and Poppy Day Care Centre, Swinton, St George's Day Care Centre, Eccles, Salford Institute for Dementia (Dementia Associates and Dementia Cafe users), and the Dementia Champions at Mount Chapel Community Centre. Finally we visited a user forum group residential care home in Stonecross, Kendal, as a contrast to the local authority related groups.

We also presented the game format to Gerontology and Dementia Care Nursing students, and Performance students and ran workshops for professional Clowning practitioners.

## Benefit to public services/business audiences

**Have there been any benefits from the programme to public service, policymakers or business audiences?**

The iBook has been developed in partnership with Salford Institute for Dementia and with the independent care agency, Aspire, based in Swinton. The reception of the iBook during the dissemination process suggests that it could in the future has an impact on the kinds and methods of entertainment and stimulation for users of daycare and residential care. For instance, the care home manager at Stonecross Care Home, Kendal, suggests that the iBook would be an appropriate tool for use in caring for bed-ridden residents as well as more mobile residents. The residential group were not our target audience but this suggests a potential improvement and change in methods of care.

## Publications

**Please provide bibliographical information on any published outputs resulting from this award. Copies of books should be submitted to the Academy, but there is no need to send copies of articles..**

Article - Journal of Assistive Technology (currently under Peer Review).

Chapter - in discussion with Professor Nicola Shaughnessy who is producing an edited volume with Methuen.

Project Webpage commentaries and Blog entries.

Conference presentations (these can be read via the project webpage):

<https://rtalbot9.wixsite.com/ludicresearch/clown-hotel>

Theatre and Performance Research Association September, 2017

International Society for Humour Studies in Tallinn Estonia, June 25th -29th 2018.

Performance Research Group presentation, School of Arts and Media, University of Salford, March 2018.

## Electronic Products Deposited

**If your research has involved the production of electronic data, have these been offered for deposit to an appropriately accessible repository?**

iBook prototype. 'Telly Service'. Available on University of Salford Figshare site

iBook prototype. 'Telly Service'. Available on project webpage:<https://rtalbot9.wixsite.com/ludicresearch/clown-hotel>

## Electronic Products Accepted

**If yes, have they been accepted? If not, please give reasons, and details of any future plans to deposit.**

iBook prototype. 'Telly Service'. Available on University of Salford Figshare site

iBook prototype. 'Telly Service'. Available on project webpage.

## Section 5 - Future Plans and Other Outcomes

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### Future Plans

**Please indicate briefly what your future plans are for building on the research already carried out..**

The next stage aims to underpin and extend the impact value of the project, following impact reviews from an external consultant, Saskia Gent. We would like to do this by developing the iBook and specifically the bespoke aspects of programming so that it can respond to user interests with more complexity. A developed version would contain a database so that users can log on and upload images to share with others, or to extend the hyperlinked interaction with online catalogues and archives that may be curated within the framework of the Clown Hotel and iBook. So for example, saving a Youtube playlist of favourite music within one of the 'hotel rooms', such as the ballroom is already possible, but we want to make this more individualised. The product would then be couched within attendant performance encounters in the local Dementia Café, and possibly in people's homes. We therefore also want and need to develop a systematic method of user testing. We also want to develop workshops that will train a network of international clown performers. In addition we would like to impact caring practices, by training nurses to family members in using the iBook tool.

### Further Projects

**Please provide details of any contacts made during the research (both academic or otherwise) which will continue beyond the end of the award. Where applicable please provide details of the planned nature of this continued contact including details of potential networks, collaborations or future activities..**

Relationships have been developed with research-practice specialist clown performers in the academy and outside via the four laboratories. We would work with these to expand the pool of performers able to participate in 'live' events offered via the iBook: Barnaby King (Edge Hill University) and Lucy Amsden (Birmingham University) and academic/stand up performer Christopher Molineux, also with clown performer Alice Robinson (Clown Lab), and student of clowning Harry Mansuell (Bolton University), Dancer

Sarah Lockwood (University of Salford) and her dance student, Ashley Shorrock from Burnley College.

We would like to develop the versatility and bespoke aspects of the iBook in partnership with Computer Science graduate Kobi Hartley and with Dr Umran Ali (University of Salford, Senior Lecturer in Creative Media)

We would like to develop Graphic Design elements to build on the very raw initial outline devised by Alice Hemmings, who has some experience of producing Dementia Friendly graphic design. Presentations amongst academics were made in the form of conference presentations in Salford and in Estonia, an international clowning master class in September 2017, attended by scholars from Brazil. The latter have invited us for a reciprocal visit. We also want to develop link with Cliniclowns, Germany/Netherlands met via the Healthcare Clowning International Meeting, Vienna as they are beginning some work on an app as well. We want to develop contacts with the Popular Performance working group after a performance paper at the Theatre and Performance Research Association in September 2017 (this is where the link with the Journal for Assistive Technology arose) and following an interim presentation at a Clowning Research Seminar attended by Clowning researchers, including clowning training specialist Dr Jon Davison (Royal Central School of Speech and Drama London) and convened by Dr Shaun May (University of Kent) in London 19th February 2017.

### **Any other outputs/outcomes**

**Please indicate briefly any other outcomes to your research not already covered.**

Live performances and workshops:

4 Laboratory Workshops, School of Arts & Media, University of Salford  
Dementia Café, University of Salford November 2016  
Student Nursing Symposium, June 2017  
Circus Symposium, 26 September 2017  
Humphrey Booth Resource Centre #1 (May 2017), #2 (May 2018)  
Mount Chapel Champions, Social Group Swinton, 2018