

Bournemouth Digital Pier

“A short scoping study to investigate the viability of an in depth analysis of the ecosystem of creative, digital and IT (CDIT) enterprises in Bournemouth with the aim to explore the replicability of the Brighton Fuse project in other locations...”

Project proposal and aims

This short scoping study set out to investigate the viability of an in depth analysis of the ecosystem of creative, digital and IT (CDIT) enterprises in Bournemouth with the aim to explore the replicability of the Brighton Fuse project¹ – a recently completed (October 2013) comprehensive investigation into the origins, development and performance of CDIT businesses in Brighton and Hove.

The aims of this feasibility study are to:

- **Explore the CDIT ecosystem in Bournemouth and identify opportunities and barriers to further growth**
- **Work with a number of CDIT stakeholders and existing networks to identify potential areas of further development or augmentation**
- **Scope and provide a recommendation on the viability of producing a major study modelled on the Brighton Fuse project**
- **Identify the scope of such a project within a broader programme of research and its potential for delivering tangible findings and recommendations**
- **Define a potential research agenda with guidelines for implementation**

Context

The digital economy is everywhere and the pervasive nature of computing has permeated all fields of endeavour with no sign of abating. Nowhere has this phenomenon been more surprising and misunderstood as in the creative business sector.



Only in recent years has the contribution that the creative industries make to the wider digital economy started to be recognised at the highest levels. This is significant as a clear government policy towards the exploitation of the digital economy is paramount to ensure that the UK does not fall behind its international competitors. The policy – and its devolvement to local regions – is still in the making.

Whilst there have always been pockets of significant success in the performing and creative arts sector, the advent of the digital creative industries has heralded a broader wave of multi-skilled entrepreneurs

¹ www.brightonfuse.com

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who are exploiting the potential of the digital economy in a variety of innovative ways. Following the lead of the pioneering Brighton Fuse project, we refer to these practitioners as belonging to the creative, digital and information technology industries, or 'CDIT' for short.

The nature of CDIT ecosystems

Successful CDIT businesses fuse together people talent from a range of disciplines – the arts, humanities, engineering, mathematics and computing – to deliver digitally-formatted products and services to a lucrative market-place. As talent pools are brought together there is a cross-fertilisation of ideas and learning leading to a dynamic, innovative and creative sector. Computer games, cinematic special effects and mobile telephone applications are examples of this sector's output.

The CDIT grouping of these businesses highlights the interdependent nature of the constituent elements of IT, creativity and design as well as the huge transformation that has occurred in terms of how we categorise industries in the 'Internet Age'. CDIT organisations are everywhere, as enterprises in their own rights or serving the creative digital needs of other companies. Even larger more corporate organisations recognise the need to fuse talent disciplines in this way in order to produce R & D excellence, marketing capability and customer delight.

This interdisciplinary nature of work and research in the Internet Age is reflected in the make-up of such organisations with their emphasis on collaboration and teamwork. All of these organisations, both large and small, require new economic ecosystems in which to evolve and develop. With few exceptions, CDIT organisations thrive in clusters of complementary- and even competitor - enterprises. Through our research, the locations of these organisations have highlighted the importance that business owners place on the work environment and hence how CDIT hubs form and grow.



Why does CDIT matter?

CDIT has assumed a highly significant space in the new internet-based economy as it taps into the products, services and lifestyles that many of us are attracted to via the 'screen scene'. This sector's growth is driven by fun and curiosity, creating entertainment, leisure, social networks and a wealth of communication and engagement tools.

Further it represents a significant and growing part of the UK economy in terms of wealth creation and jobs for educated and talented people. An argument has been successfully made by the #IncludeDesign campaign that this sector matters at the education level, as too narrow a national

curriculum would potentially exclude those with dominant creative skills from being able to contribute to the digital economy². At both local and national levels there is still much uncertainty about the numbers involved in CDIT. This is partly due to the ambiguity of the terminology and partly the nature of job descriptions. However, as a leading contributor to the re-emergence of the strength of the UK economy, it is time to increase our understanding of CDIT and swiftly learn how we can support its further growth.



Bournemouth conurbation CDIT hub development

This report illustrates how Bournemouth and its urban neighbourhood meets a number of factors that our research identifies as critical for CDIT hub development. An existing cluster is apparent and there is an opportunity for immediate and longer-term development of Bournemouth as a leading-edge CDIT hub location. The town is on the cusp of evolving into a new, modern, environmentally-rich habitation that is appealing to visitors and inhabitants alike.

²

<http://www.digitalartsonline.co.uk/news/creative-business/design-industry-backs-new-design-technology-national-curriculum/> - article on the successful introduction of design into the National Curriculum.

Importantly, there is a growing pool of CDIT talent being formed from local higher education graduate output, external graduate talent locating in the region, and incoming CDIT professionals who see the attractions of the area for re-location. An encouraging track record of new start-ups and other initiatives such as support networks, festivals and exhibitions can be observed as a platform for CDIT hub expansion.

The huge potential for this area locally has already been recognised by the creation of a Digital Manifesto³, signed off by a number of local authorities, educational establishments and private-sector representatives. Whilst other towns and cities in the UK have their own initiatives and local characteristics, few can match the convergence of creative talent, business acumen, political will and environmental beauty that could see Bournemouth assert its place and identity as a key hub for CDIT enterprise in the future.

The full report can be found in the Projects section of the ITaaU website: <http://www.itutility.ac.uk>⁴

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³ Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (2013) *A Manifesto For Our Creative and Digital Economy* Report

⁴ <http://www.itutility.ac.uk/pilot-projects/creative-digital-it-cdit-feasibility-study/>

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Report recommendations

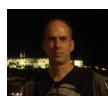
Based on our research the following seven recommendations are proposed:

1. A comprehensive **real-time programme of research** that will offer a deeper understanding of the CDIT sector across Bournemouth and the Bournemouth conurbation, and an increased awareness of the issues involved in supporting and analysing CDIT practitioners and their clusters. This would encompass analysis of the technical, creative, economic and business aspects of the initiative.
2. An evaluation of **strategic model options** and their operational implementation that could lead and sustain the development of Bournemouth as an internationally recognised CDIT hub.
3. The development of a wider **regional CDIT support network** (CDIT-South) that would harness the existing local networks; build upon the legacy of existing wider regional networks such as e-Research South which links Bournemouth, Southampton, Reading, Bath, Oxford and other universities, and also draw upon other networks such as IT as a Utility Network+ and similar communities of interest. The Centre for Digital Entertainment (CDE) that links Bournemouth and Bath Universities would also benefit from this network. Links with CDIT activity in Bristol have also been identified.
4. Establishing a **programme of workshops**, events and activities that would engage all Bournemouth CDIT hub stakeholders in the development of a local creative, digital economy.
5. A series of **pilot projects** to develop prototype and proof of concept solutions to connect university research teams, companies and other bodies on the micro, mezzo and macro levels.
6. Funding of **short-term secondments** for experts and specialists to transfer between enterprises, public-sector organisations, universities and local government to foster understanding and share skill sets.
7. **Promotion and dissemination** of the benefits of the local CDIT hub, how hub development can be achieved, and the resources needed for it to thrive.



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