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**Conference or Workshop Item**

**Title:** Developing research and visual analysis skills in design students: a multi-agency approach

**Creators:** Hoon, W., Dimmock, G., MacLellan, F. and Stenning, S.

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**Version:** Session background information

<http://nectar.northampton.ac.uk/6635/>



# Developing research and visual analysis skills in design students: a multi-agency approach

## Session Background Information

The object analysis workshop we are hosting today is, in many ways, the culmination of a long-term collaboration involving teaching staff and library staff from within the UoN School of the Arts and Library and Learning Services. Our work together has provided student-learning experiences for a range of design-based modules covering graphics, illustration, fashion, textiles, surface design and printed textiles and ranging from levels four to six. Our collaboration has enabled us to blend approaches, maximize resources and share ideas, and has already resulted in the publication of *Memories: Information, Discovery, Documentary*, as part of the *Innovative Learning: Only Connect...Discovery Pathways, Library Explorations and the Information Adventure* (un)book (Huddersfield/Innovative Libraries 2013).

Today's event is based around a workshop we lead for level five BA Graphic Communications and BA Illustration students and is intended to introduce them to research methodologies. Students are invited to choose either a publication from the library's Special Collections or a poster from the Osborne Robinson collection and from this create a research-led narrative that interrogates their object from the perspective of three standpoints:

- The visual
- The technical
- The cultural

The project seeks to prepare students for the final year dissertation and enables them to work not only with secondary source material, but also primary research methodologies and, in particular, object analysis.

By blending the delivery of this project we, as both teaching and library staff, are able to offer students a far broader range of academic and pastoral advice and guidance – indeed students are actively encouraged to arrange further meetings with the curators of the collections and to draw directly on their knowledge and expertise.

Finally this hands on introduction to research methods through object analysis, as well as the cross-agency delivery of the workshop and follow up sessions, takes a formal academic exercise – the research-led essay – and re-purposes it as an experiential series of activities that both stretch and engage the student.