



FUNDING FOR FILM AS RESEARCH

Funding for film as research comes from diverse sources, although there is a core of funding from universities and research funders. Most research films use a combination of funding types, and the successful ones take a creative and holistic approach to research and production, considering different sources of funding and support for the various stages of a film's lifecycle. This case study outlines the most common funding sources, with insights into how to make the most of opportunities available.

FUNDING OVERVIEW

The Filmmaking Research Network has surveyed 152 research films from the UK and Australia, to examine sources and types of funding. Of the 152 films in the register, 142 supplied budget details, 106 from the UK and 36 from Australia. Four commercially made films have been removed from the analysis to ensure comparability within the academy.

The total sums invested in UK films produced as research was £2.4m, with £823,540 (Aus\$1.4m) invested in Australian films. Of the films with no recorded budget the majority were short experimental films. The main sources of funding were research council funding, public funding and University funding from internal grants and awards. On average, value of funding for these films was similar in Australia and the UK, at close to £23,000 (Aus\$40,000).

FILM BUDGETS

	Australia	UK
No. of films in the database	36	102
Total value £	823,540	2,380,605
Total value Aus\$	1,423,900	4,398,777
No of films externally funded (research councils, public sources etc.)	17	60
Value of external funding £	429,100	1,219,895
Value of external funding Aus\$	742,000	2,254,068
No of films University funded	25	66
Value of University funding £	115,082	343,240
Value of University funding Aus\$	199,000	593,514

ACADEMIC FUNDING SOURCES

RANGE OF FUNDING

Academic funding sources include both internal and external funding outlined in the table and covers research council funders such as the AHRC and ESRC, or the Australia Research Council but also academies such as the British Academy and charitable research funders such as Wellcome Trust, Leverhulme Trust or NESTA.

Academic funding also includes internal university research grants to which some of the points below may apply, but they tend to have application guidance specific to their own institutions and so won't feature extensively in this analysis.

Each research funder also has its own requirements and specialties, for example NESTA has a focus on 'innovation' while Leverhulme has a reputation for supporting blue skies research. While few mention film specifically as a supported research method, it does feature somewhere in most archives of funded research. Ensuring that your research objectives are in line with the funder's priorities or approach, and that your research methods are appropriate to explore those objectives, is more important than the particular method you are intending to use. Some academic funders, for example the British Academy, explicitly state they do not support practice based research. However, it is worth considering how such organisations can fund elements of a filmmaking research project, for example pre-production research in a film archive, interviews with participants, literature or film reviews.

HOW TO WIN FUNDING

To be successful in achieving academic funding for filmmaking, it is important to understand how your film is a research project which meets established research modes. Applications have to define clearly-articulated research questions, issues or problems, set in a clear context of other research in that area, and using appropriate research methods and/or approaches. Film is acknowledged as a legitimate output of research but also as an integral part of a research process. So, the nature of a research film is often determined by the research process and may not be fully known at the outset. This is in contrast to commercial film funding sources which emphasize at application stage, a complete, clear and comprehensive film proposal before funding. This distinction is crucial for filmmakers to understand. Research councils also expect practice to be accompanied by some account of the research process. Where creativity or practice does not involve such a process it would usually be ineligible for research funding.

OPEN ACCESS

When considering applying for research council funding in particular, it is also sensible to be aware that considerations of open access and/or 'exploitation' are relevant. In particular there is a need to consider the extent to which the outputs that are produced, for example, by AHRC or ESRC-funded projects will be available to the research community, and other interested parties through dissemination or specific distribution mechanisms.

AHRC FUNDING

SCALE OF AHRC FUNDING

The largest single source of academic funding for filmmaking in the database is the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). From the register, the AHRC was identified by 13 films, via a variety of mechanisms including grant awards, fellowships, follow on funding and PhDs.

In addition, looking at the UK funded projects database Gateway to Research (the public face of UK funded research projects) reveals that between 2006 and 2017, 52 projects featured the word 'filmmaking'. Of these, 49 were funded by the AHRC, two by ESRC and one by EPSRC. 44 of the projects were research grants and eight were fellowships. Awards totaled £8.9m with average award £92,270 but the median is £26,797. Not all of these projects feature filmmaking as part of the research, some look at filmmaking from a purely theoretical, conceptual perspective, not in terms of practice.

TYPES OF AHRC FUNDING

AHRC offers research funding for arts and humanities research through a variety of funding opportunities, from postgraduate studentships to large scale collaborative research grants, specialist training schemes, strategic programmes, fellowships and research networking.

Research funding is available through the AHRC's responsive mode schemes (funding for high quality research in any subject area within the AHRC's remit) and through research programmes and other specific initiatives.

The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) ran a series of funding calls under the 'Conflict Theme' of the Partnership for Conflict, Crime and Security (PaCCS) Research. The AHRC funded the project 'Community Experience of Conflict in Haiti: Assessing the Emotional Legacy of Civilian Deaths as a result of Intense Use of Force by UN Peacekeepers' through this call between November 2016 and June 2018, to a value of £79,752. The project, led by Siobhan Wills of the University of Ulster in collaboration with Cahal McLaughlin

(School of Creative Arts, QUB) combines socio-legal research and participatory practice, in order to 'analyse how the law governing UN peacekeepers' use of force is understood and applied in practice, and to explore the impact on local communities of the use of deadly force by peacekeepers'.

The researchers frame the use of film in the project:

"The project will use participatory documentary film practices (which ensure that participants are co-owners of the project and have control over the use of material in which they appear) as a means by which people that are normally marginalised from international decision-making processes that affect them, may have their voices heard and taken into account in the drafting of UN mission rules of engagement and policy guidelines. The film will enable policy makers to consider the physical, emotional and psychological (and hence political) effects of the use of deadly force on the people living in the communities in which the UN carries out its operations."



**Diorlie Dorcius: Cité Soleil,
Port-au-Prince, Haiti**

PUBLIC FUNDING SOURCES

Public funding sources include Arts Council England, Film London, Creative England, British Film Institute, Screen Australia and Australia Council. These funders provide support for films that are either not suitable for commercial funding (arts funding) or need further development, support or investment for commercial purposes (screen funding).

The research component of these films is less important than for the research funders and applications will focus on creative, strategic and practical elements of your proposal. You will usually be required to submit detailed outlines of the proposed film including treatments and script, information on the structure, characters and stylistic / visual approach of the film, a detailed budget and a distribution strategy.

For screen institutions, the commercial viability of a project is of utmost importance. They support projects that will reach large audiences, that have award potential, that develop the careers of (usually established) filmmakers and actors and which showcase the UK film industry to international investors, studios and distributors.

For arts funders, there is an emphasis on projects that are often issue based, which demonstrate diversity and inclusion in their production and/or exhibition and which can reach targeted audiences who will benefit from participation in the arts. They are also interested in developing the careers of artists, curators and arts organisations through training, networking, international exchanges and supporting exhibitions.

As these are publicly funded organisations, their funding emphasis will reflect the current political, social and economic climate of the government of the time. An understanding of how these play out in each organisation's strategic goals is essential when applying for funding.

Screen Australia contributed Aus\$280,000 to the \$500,000 budget of *Baxter and Me* (Leahy, 2016, 80') a documentary about the writer/director's relationships, particularly with her dog. It was part of the Signature Documentary Program which provides production funding for projects that are 'bold in form and content'. The stories can be local or international, but they must have an Australian team with a strong vision. This program is unique in that it doesn't require a broadcaster attachment. Funded as part of \$1.15 million in funding for seven feature length documentaries through Screen Australia Signature funding program, initiating \$2.69 million worth of production.

BAXTER AND ME

85 mins

Gecko Films Pty Ltd

Producer: Sue Brooks

Director: Gillian Leahy

Distributor: Ronin Films and self distributed

Website and sales: www.baxterandme.com

Logline : One independent woman's life with and without men, but always with dogs.



Research Context: *Baxter and Me* is a feature documentary exploring human relationships of intimacy with dogs. Carol J Adams has argued for a decolonization of human-animal relationships. The research question for this project was: how can fictional filmmaking techniques be employed in a documentary to promote empathy for a companion animal relationship? The project demonstrates that dramatic film techniques such as shot/reverse shot editing, aesthetically-framed shots, three-point lighting, strong colour saturation in the grade and emotive music can be employed with little difficulty to create an emotional reaction to the companion animal relationship similar to the way that human relationships are traditionally presented in fictional films. This film received \$280,000 funding from Screen Australia, and screened in the Australian Documentary Competition at the Sydney Film Festival 2016 and a further 5 festivals, local and international to date.

OTHER SOURCES

Many research films use several kinds of funding to develop, complete and distribute films. The more formal research sources are supplemented with a wide range of other funding e.g. trusts, crowdfunding, personal loans, patronage, corporate sponsorship, in-kind funding, and private investment by production companies. There is also soft funding support that can be considered such as residencies, equipment or facilities bursaries, mentoring and training.

In-kind funding is a very common form of support for filmmaking, and this is usually related to equipment, facilities or resources, often supplied by universities themselves, collaborators or production/facilities companies. Frequently labour is supplied without charge. Sometimes filmmakers will take out personal loans or source investment from friends and contacts. Investment from private production companies is another possible source. Joanna Callaghan's film 'Love in the Post: From Plato to Derrida' (2014, 80') received investment from production company Heraclitus Pictures which provided executive producer expertise, accountancy, office space and networks and forfeited a production fee.

CROWD FUNDING

Crowd funding has increasingly been seen as an attractive alternative for some films. Many filmmakers find this approach time consuming and challenging although it can lead to essential additional funds for certain elements of filmmaking, see *The Acting Class* box. Crowdfunding may work best for films with an engaging social message, or where the film has already gathered a strong following within a particular community or through social media. Filmmakers must weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of different platforms, for example whether funds are released only after reaching a certain target or not, and consider what benefits investors are eligible for.

THE ACTING CLASS

Year: 2017

Duration: 77mins

Director/s: Deirdre O'Neill, Mike Wayne

Cost: £3,000

Funding source: Brunel University - £1,000

Indiegogo crowdfunding - £2,136

Distribution: Insidefilm Network



Synopsis: The Acting Class is a documentary feature film that explores the causes and consequences of class stratification in the acting profession. The documentary speaks to both successful actors (such as Christopher Eccleston, Maxine Peake and Julie Hesmondhalgh) who are concerned about the obstacles to participation in the arts for the next generation of actors as well as actors trying to break into the profession now. The film follows struggling actor Tom Stocks who sets up Actor Awareness, a campaign highlighting socio-economic exclusion in the profession and a network helping other actors like himself to support each other on creative projects. The film explores the link between financial resources and success, discrimination within the industry, the link between education and opportunity, the London-centric nature of the business and the precarious nature of the work. There are important social justice considerations for individuals with acting aspirations but there are also broader implications for the capacity of film, television and theatre to represent

society in its full range. In addition, barriers to entry for actors coming from working class backgrounds may also harm the film, television and theatrical industries economically, cutting them off from product innovation and audiences, both domestically and internationally. This film aims to highlight the debate, using the words of the people most directly affected by socio-economic exclusion in the acting profession. To hear their accents, to see their gestures and facial expressions, to listen to their insights into how socio-economic exclusion works and with what consequences, brings alive recent scholarly work that has been exploring inequality in the cultural industries in general, including in the acting profession specifically.

CROWD FUNDING Q&A WITH DEIRDRE O'NEILL, MIKE WAYNE DIRECTORS OF THE ACTING CLASS 2017:

What were the factors that led you to choose the crowdfunding approach?

We had shot most of the production by the time we got to the crowdfunding stage. We decided to crowd fund because we needed funds to produce the DVD of the film which we could sell at screenings and online to help fund the expenses associated with travelling with the film to screenings and doing Q&As. So, the crowdfunding was for post-production mostly. By the time we began crowdfunding we had been working on the film for around 18 months and had built up a social media presence online via the Twitter handle for the film. Therefore, we already had a network of supporters and interested people who could help with both contributing to the crowdfunding and spreading the message.

Do you think a strong social message for a crowdfunded film is important?

Our crowdfunding campaign was reasonably successful because a) it did resonate with many people who were concerned about the issue of inequality in the performing arts and thought that it was an issue that needed to be discussed; b) because it was essentially completion funds, it was a low risk contribution - people could be very confident that the money they donated would not be wasted and would help push the film over the line; c) because it was nearly completed, the idea was well formed and we also had some established stars in the documentary which also added credibility.

Any lessons for others taking this route?

Over 7,000 people visited our site so in retrospect we should have made it easier for people to make a very small contribution, say of £2 instead of the minimum starting contribution of £10. With a smaller starting figure, we would have perhaps captured many more than just 65 backers out of all those visits and that would have pushed up the overall total, possibly very considerably.

ABOUT FRN

The Filmmaking Research Network (FRN) provides insight into the condition and dimensions of filmmaking as research. FRN aims to consolidate the field of filmmaking research by sharing best practice internationally, and developing resources. Funded by the AHRC, the FRN is a partnership between the University of Sussex (UK) and the University of Newcastle (Australia).

www.filmmakingresearch.net

Thanks to insightsforimpact.co.uk for support with this case study.

