JOHN MAGUIRE: Hello and welcome to this Learning Innovation Unit podcast. In this episode today we will be talking to Dr Sally Tuckett who works in the College of Arts at the University and if you don’t mind Sally, could you just take a minute and introduce yourself? Tell us how you got to where you are and that path.

DR SALLY TUCKETT: Of course, Hi. So yeah, I’m Sally Tucket and I’m a lecture in dress and textile histories based in the History of Art subject area, but I’m essentially a social historian that is interested in the lives of ordinary people in the past and so dress and textiles are my way in. Looking at what people were wearing where they’re getting clothes from, and what that tells us about the wider society, and so my background is essentially history and Scottish history, so my focus in research is Scottish dress and textiles, in the 18th and 19th centuries. So yeah, that’s me.

JOHN MAGUIRE: Excellent, thank you very much. The focus of this podcast is really to look at your experience of developing a MOOC on Royal Fashion in partnership with Historic Royal Palaces. I just wondered if you could tell us a little bit about what that course covers and how you came to be involved and that development of that course.

DR SALLY TUCKETT: Yeah, so the course is… This MOOC is quite unusual I think because it’s five weeks long, so we cover quite a lot of material and we basically cover 500 years of royal history in Britain from Henry the eighth up to Elizabeth the 2nd. Each week we look at a different royal dynasty and how fashion, clothing, textiles play a part in those reigns, and so if a particular monarch used clothing to make a political statement, or, just how clothing was used at court as a way to get social access, all those kinds of aspects. So it covers a lot of ground in the five weeks and the crux of it is the Historic Royal Palaces, royal ceremonial dress collection.

So the course came about because Historic Royal Palaces, I think they contacted Future learn and asked, is there anybody that’s got the interest and expertise to help us develop this course? And so it came to our attention here and we have a Masters program in Dress and Textile history, so it seemed like a really good fit that we could incorporate our expertise and work with their collection. So we put in a proposal and suggesting a course outline which became the eventual course outline, which is quite pleasing, and that was the start of it.

JOHN MAGUIRE: I think that’s totally what I remember from it as well.

DR SALLY TUCKETT: Good.

JOHN MAGUIRE: Yeah, that’s totally what I remember from it as well, and I think it was, It was really nice to find that we had an expertise that would fit such a high profile area. You know, the Historic Royal Palaces what great opportunity to work with them and like you say, I think great success there in the fact that you’re. course outline was very much what we went with in the end. So I think that was kind of saying that we are the institution to help hit this.

DR SALLY TUCKETT: It’s not often that happens when you plan, a course, and it actually ends up being what you planned it to be. That was quite nice.

JOHN MAGUIRE: But I suppose that kind of brings me on to talk a little bit about the development and sort of to think about, tell us a little bit about what you got from that development process, now and tell us what you think about the mapping process. ‘cause we took you through it myself and John Kerr, in the University. We took you through it and try to show you how a MOOC, or a Future learn MOOC in particular should be structured. Looking at the types of activities and things.

So just talk about what you remember from that process and how that helped you think about what the course would look like and the shape of it, and think a little bit about a what you gained, and this is quite an important one because the partnership was really good. So what did you gain from that, for your area, working with Historic Royal Palaces?

DR SALLY TUCKETT: So as far as the process goes, I do remember sitting down and looking at those diagrams that you and John gave me of mapping things out. And the biggest hurdle I found, I think, was actually just the different terminology of how in MOOCS They’re called steps and it sounds like such a basic thing, but it took me a long time to wrap my head around it, just like, OK, that’s just a section.

we need a section here on this and then the next section on this and thinking about the variety of breaking it up ‘cause I’ve never taught online before and in the classroom when you’re teaching students face to face, I think it’s probably ingrained in us now that you have to vary the pace a little bit. You might need to like, offer breaks or you, play a video clip or you arrange some sort of class discussion to break up the class so that’s ingrained in us now.

But when it comes to the online format, that was a completely new way of thinking about it is like, well, how do I do this if I’ve got no control over actually what the student is doing, I’m not going to see them interacting with this material. So how do we break it up so it was learning to think like, well, OK, uh, what I wanted to be a 1500 word essay should actually only be 500 words. And then what comes after that? Breaking up text with videos with activities and making sure that that flow of activity and learning process also fits with the content.

So it took quite a while to balance those things out ‘cause you might have an excellent activity, but it doesn’t actually hit with the aims of what that week is and so we had to jettison some things because it just didn’t quite fit. Others we did manage to manipulate and keep them in like the ruff building task, that was a fun one.

JOHN MAGUIRE: Yeah, I think that’s that’s key. I think there’s two things that for me that you hit on there that are really key working on these types of projects is the terminology, I think we call things articles and we’re used to thinking of academic journal articles. Yeah, and which are quite lengthy at times, but we’re talking about a small piece of writing this around 500 words and things like a step just being a piece of content really is that kind of thing.

DR SALLY TUCKETT: So to have a step that could literally just be a question for discussion in the chat that was like, oh OK. Yep, we can do that. That’s good.

JOHN MAGUIRE: Yeah, absolutely, there was something else I was thinking of there that it’s gone now. I had written it down.

DR SALLY TUCKETT: Sorry

JOHN MAGUIRE: That’s OK, that’s OK. Oh! Sorry it was the, the layout of the course you spoke around, how you were already doing things. You would know that giving a lecture you would then break up with a video or maybe a bit of discussion and things, and I think that’s key when I talk to people about developing MOOCs, you’re already doing a lot of it, but just think about how that breaks down into tiny little pieces so you are saying, well, we do a bet on, Here’s the information you need for the history. Here’s a video to watch. Here’s something to discuss what we’ve just learned and it’s trying to break that down in section it off into that sort of platform and in that environment, I think is key, but it’s good to know that you now, think about those things as well. As you’ve worked through an online development, but the other part of that question for me was what about the process of working in partnership with HRP, Royal palaces was good for you.

DR SALLY TUCKETT: On a completely frivolous level, the best part was just spending all the time in the palaces, so the collaboration they were really keen because they wanted to increase footfall going to the palaces so this is obviously pre pandemic. When people could go and visit places they wanted to get people interested in Kensington Palace, Tower of London, Hampton Court. All these key places that are sites and so it was about building the course. Into those places and highlighting those as well. So all the filming happened in all these places that you learn about at school like Henry the eighth’s dining hall. All these great places.

And because we had to do filming, it had to be when they were closed to the public. So we, and you, must remember this being there late at night in the middle of winter, absolutely freezing, but being in the center of Hampton Court with nobody around. It was just fantastic. So like the the kid in me that’s always loved history was just like this is the chance to go behind that door when you’re walking around a historic building, and you never allowed to go behind certain doors, and you’re like you could, and it was actually just a 1960s toilet and that was fantastic and working with the curators was brilliant.

The team at historical policies worked really hard on this and seeing the logistics that went behind the production side of this in terms of the filming from. the palaces perspective was just mind-blowing because they had to deal with so many different factors that if we just done this in the university, I don’t think we ever would have thought of. I can still picture all those cameras that were supported by tennis balls because you couldn’t damage the floor, all the permission from conservation that we had to get. Like, could you film in this place? Will we damaged this tapestry? Is this wall OK? All those things that we would never have thought of.

Or, I would never have thought of, that they had to deal with was just mind blowing and they were, but the knowledge that those curators have. Is incredible, and I think the outcome from the course was the learners loved seeing what the curators do behind the scenes, they love seeing all of that stuff and I love seeing all that stuff too. It’s just what that’s what I think is fantastic about this subject.

JOHN MAGUIRE: Yeah, I think is well, I can touch on a few things around that as well. I remember being in a part of I think it was the Tower of London and someone showing us an area and you just like.. and me not being a historian, you’re just going, they said, this is where someone was kept or something and you...

DR SALLY TUCKETT: Thomas More’s Cell.

JOHN MAGUIRE: Yeah, so you were just like Oh my God, this is unbelievable. Really this and such an important part of history and me as a non historian was going, “who’s that?”

So it’s good to see you. I find that a lot of the the mix is good to see the people who are, the subject experts just really like in some sense geeking out about the you know the area. So it’s been a great thing for that, and I think to echo what you said around the, HRP team. I mean there was the curators and there was the education team.

And just to logistics and trying to put all together to what we wanted and what they wanted, it was a fantastic process to work through and trying to match our needs with the Royal Palaces needs but the other thing that I’ve noticed since that is that we have had some of those curators guest at the university.

DR SALLY TUCKETT: Yeah yeah so we’ve got fantastic connections. I mean I’m hoping we can still continue with that but uhm yeah we’ve had guest lecturers coming to teach the masters students on the dress and textile histories program. Just before we all went into lockdown we were actually in London with students and we went round the world palaces. So Eleri Lynn, who did so many of the videos, she gave us a little tour of the stores and so the students got to see the the stores, so I’m hoping that’s a relationship that we can still keep going, because it is a fantastic collection and it’s and I think I said at the beginning I’m interested in ordinary people.

So, royal Fashion was a bit of a out there topic for me and it’s still just, it’s just brilliant though, it’s it’s absolutely fantastic. So yeah, hopefully we can keep that going and I think what historic royal palaces do in terms of engagement is something that’s really useful for students to learn from, and this is something we learnt from the MOOC as well, like their remit for who their target audience is. Which as far as I can workout, was basically anybody and everybody but writing to that audience and seeing how they engage with them in the palaces themselves and with the digital engagement, they do a really good job of reaching out to people.

And I, I think it was nice to be part of something that is involved in that. I mean, it was hard too. There were struggles and can still remember the debate over whether or not we include the word sartorial, ‘cause it was a bit too much of a complicated people wouldn’t know it, and I was like, but they’ll use a dictionary. They can look it up.

JOHN MAGUIRE: It’s funny how those just little things become so important though as well in this in this type of environment, yeah, and I think what a wonderful, I don’t know about the the visit that you had managed to do and what wonderful opportunity for our students to get that, and that’s through this successful partnership that we’ve managed. So that’s brilliant to hear that. So I suppose the next thing then sort of leads on quite positively as well in that this course has been massively successful. It’s been fantastic. It continues to perform really well on the Future Learn platform.

I think we’ve got somewhere in the region of, in fact, I’ll pull this stats up just now, but we’ve got around 56,000 enrollments on the course and

DR SALLY TUCKETT: Something like that, yeah.

JOHN MAGUIRE: So that’s that’s an amazing number of people who who are potentially exposed to the University of Glasgow’s work and Royal Palaces work. So that’s brilliant. But the reaction has been great from the public. But what’s been the reaction in your area of work, within the university and also your peers, outside of the university and. People in that area. Have you had any feedback and reaction from the industry? It’s generally been very positive. I think most discussion is around with colleagues who are like I see, you’ve done a MOOC. What’s it like to do a MOOC? that’s been most of the chat around it and talking to others who’ve run MOOCs in the past and their experiences of it.

And that’s been interesting to hear about that as well. ‘cause they’ve, especially if they’ve done one on their own ‘cause in, a partnership one you are there are limitations that we had to work with and the palaces had to work with as well, so that changed things a bit, so it seems to be positive and just people reaching out saying I’m thinking about doing a MOOC and really nicely saying that they want to reach the standard that royal fashion presented, which is really gratifying to hear. And it’s great. When you when you’re creating these things, you’re just so in them. You don’t even really think about it.

And the fact that I think the production value is incredible for the videos, the fact that we’ve got this amazing access to these amazing objects really helped it and all the expertise that came in. I think the fact that it is a truly collaborative venture I think is part of its success. ‘cause we’ve got so many different voices in there that it really really helps. So yeah, it’s it’s. It’s been really fun talking to colleagues who are thinking about it and then sort of passing on some expertise. Don’t do five weeks. Don’t do a five week course.

JOHN MAGUIRE: I think we’ve entered into the sort of sweet spot of somewhere three or four. You know, that’s OK. Yeah, that’s the five weeks are quite massive and we’ve done. one or two before in royal fashion. But yeah, the five weeks is a big course. But like you say, back to what you said at the start, it’s around the amount of information that we covered in that and what success to get all of that into five weeks and in a very nice manner. So moving on to the next question, I suppose is, what has this made you feel about what’s next for you in online delivery and with this whole process that you’ve been through?

I remember you actually taking something, you probably won’t remember it, but I remember you asking me about something. I’m saying, you know, and I said to you, like you did in the MOOC and you were like “Oh yeah, of course” and it was about just enabling discussions online with your students and so things like that. I’m thinking around practices what you’ve picked up from it may be touched on that. I’ll be back earlier in the chat and sort of what we transferred and especially given this, pivot to the online with the COVID-19 pandemic, how did you feel you were placed after having done a bit of online development?

DR SALLY TUCKETT: So I’ll deal with that bit first I think. I believe that having the having done the MOOC and seeing how online learning can work. That that did give me more confidence for the online pivot when we had to go online last March. There are different. It’s a different way of teaching. When you’re teaching post graduate students and undergraduate students in a live environment, so it’s a different from that perspective. But in terms of planning, I found it really useful. A lot of the time I had you in the back of my head saying videos should only be 7 minutes, they stop watching after 7 minutes, no more than 7 minutes.

So I had that the back of my head when I was recording lectures and tried as much as I could to break it up into chunks or smaller videos didn’t always work because you won’t be surprised to know that I wasn’t good at cutting off. Then putting things in a succinct manner. But it was at the back of my head that that’s what I should do. And I think that did give me more of an understanding of how to approach it.

So if I’ve gone in cold to the pandemic with without having done this kind of thing, I think I really would have just been like I’ll just record everything and do whatever I can, and it actually was like no, there’s other ways I can do this. it did help a lot with that, and it is something that I would like to do again. I think enough time has passed now that it is something that I would like to do again, but, this course came to us rather than us developing it ourselves, so I would like to do something which is actually more embedded in my own teaching.

In my own practice that I can use for either the postgraduate degree or perhaps as the basis of a junior honours or senior honours course, so something that’s a bit more embedded in what we’re doing would be useful. I have used lots of elements of this for teaching. I’ve now sort of rewritten some other courses to bring in elements of the Royal Fashion course, ‘cause we’ve got all this material that is fantastic. Why not use it so the videos have been great? Just putting those up as sort of teasers for topics and stuff like that, but it would be good to do something that’s more us from the ground up so that we can start to think about.

So we were thinking about. One that could be the basis of a junior honours course, but also serve the public interest. And then if we get students coming to the Masters program, who don’t have experience addressing textile history. It’s a great thing to point them towards and be like build up, do this over the summer before you come to us and you’ll get a sense of the kind of thing we do. We’re going to be doing.

JOHN MAGUIRE: Yeah, that’s a great idea. Yeah.

DR SALLY TUCKETT: So it would be good to have that in the bank as well. Royal fashion is also great for that. We can point them towards that and it’s now pretty much open for the foreseeable. So we can certainly do that, and I think. It would be fun to do another one, but I would be more strategic about how to build it more into my own teaching because royal fashion was fantastic, but at the time it wasn’t anything to do with anything that I was teaching.

JOHN MAGUIRE: So you’ve kind of gone back the way in some sense in what can I use from this and work into my teaching now rather than seeing what they teach and what would benefit my students my learners. I think that’s a great approach here is to think of it what is the bigger picture that you’re trying to achieve with it? And I think. From our discussions, you’re already looking at even with your next project. Looking at working with other museums as well.

So the partnership thing is still very key, and I think that’s a great thing to sort of keep in the back of your mind and it was one of the big successes of this project, so I think that’s great as well, but I think that’s everything from me for this, and I thank you very much for the interview. I think. To summarise, I would say that looking at what we’ve achieved and what the course has achieved and speaking to you today, I think the key strengths here are really around that partnership working and the ability that you’ve had to take some of what you’ve learned in production of the MOOC and transfer that to some of your other work.

No matter that it didn’t always work. You always had this sort of the the thoughts in your head about what would work, and I think we see that we would do the MOOC development. It’s nothing new, it’s about chunking it into smaller pieces and trying to get that across and it’s a very established practice for a long time and online development, and it’s clearly what for this course as we know that this course was voted the number one course by Future learn learners. It was a pool of learners. I believe that were polled and said which course did you take and which did you enjoy the most? And this was this was right up there at number 1.

So what I great success for you. Great success for the university. Great success for Historic Royal Palaces and it’s great to see that you’ve enjoyed working on that project and aren’t quite. scared off and would like to go to another one. They know that you’ve got the headspace for it.

DR SALLY TUCKETT: It’s out there now. I’ve committed myself, yeah.

JOHN MAGUIRE: So yeah, thank you very much for your time today and we look forward to speaking to you again in the future when the next project comes round.

DR SALLY TUCKETT: Thanks for having me

JOHN MAGUIRE: Thank you, bye now.