

Research Integrity for Practice Research

REPORT 1

What is practice research?

REPORT 2

How can practice research be shared?

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Research Integrity in Practice Research

UKRIO | Research Integrity Webinar



PRAGUK

B A C K G R O U N D

- How does practice research enrich our ways of knowing and understanding the world? And how can it be shared?
- The commissioning of these reports emerged from the discussions, debates and lobbying supported and led by the Practice Research Advisory Group UK (PRAG-UK) to provide a way to articulate and advocate for the concerns of the practice research community.
<https://prag-uk.org/>
- The reports were published on 1 April 2021 and are hosted on the British Library shared research repository:
<https://doi.org/10.23636/1347>

F R A M E W O R K

- Practice research is a type of research where practice is the significant method conveyed in a research output.
- In a practice research output, a research narrative articulates the research inquiry that has emerged in practice.
- Practice research enables researchers to share the ways of knowing that emerge in practice.

As Steven Hill (Director of Research at Research England) observes, practice research presents a huge opportunity for the modernising and revitalising of research communication in the present day:

I think you could almost argue that practice research is in a position to be inventing its dissemination route for the digital era, and can learn all the lessons about what's gone wrong over 400 years in written research communication and actually get it right, rather than be stuck with a 16th, 17th century model that we're trying to fit into a different world.

Steven Hill, interview by the authors, 27 June 2019.

“Part of writing up research is scrubbing it clean of the flights of fancy, idle play, and the thousand trials and errors that give rise to even the smallest of findings. [...] There was something embarrassing about admitting that the tangle of our unfounded conjectures, fantasies, and metaphors might have helped shape our research. Regardless, imagination forms part of the everyday business of inquiring. Science isn’t an exercise in cold-blooded rationality. Scientists are—and have always been—emotional, creative, intuitive, whole human beings, asking questions about a world that was never made to be catalogued and systematized.”

Merlin Sheldrake, *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change Our Minds & Shape Our Futures*, 2020.

M E T H O D S

62 direct participants from across disciplines and institutions

Face-to-face interviews with:

- researchers and practitioners,
- university research managers, publishers,
- research support professionals, systems administrators.

Questionnaires and surveys with research support professionals and policymakers.

In-depth literature review including technical standards for storing and preserving practice research.

REPORT 1

WHAT
is PRACTICE
RESEARCH?

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R E P O R T 1

1.1 *Exploring Practice Research*

- Practice research is a type of research where practice is the significant method conveyed in a research output.
- In a practice research output, a research narrative articulates the research inquiry that has emerged in practice.
- Practice research enables researchers to share the ways of knowing that emerge in practice.
- In practice research, intuitive, embodied, tacit, imaginative, affective and sensory ways of knowing can find their expression in a research output.
- Practice research is not solely an academic concern, although the discussions around it have up to now generally taken place in academia.
- Practice research exists across and beyond disciplines, and is conducive to being transdisciplinary.

R E P O R T 1

1.2 The field of practice research

- The umbrella term 'practice research' frames a research field that exists across and beyond disciplines.
- Practice research varies across and beyond subjects and disciplines, with many possible balances of practice and research, and potentially multiple methods present in its operation.
- Research narratives in practice research outputs can take many forms, be in any format and work best when they effectively communicate the research inquiry.

R E P O R T 1

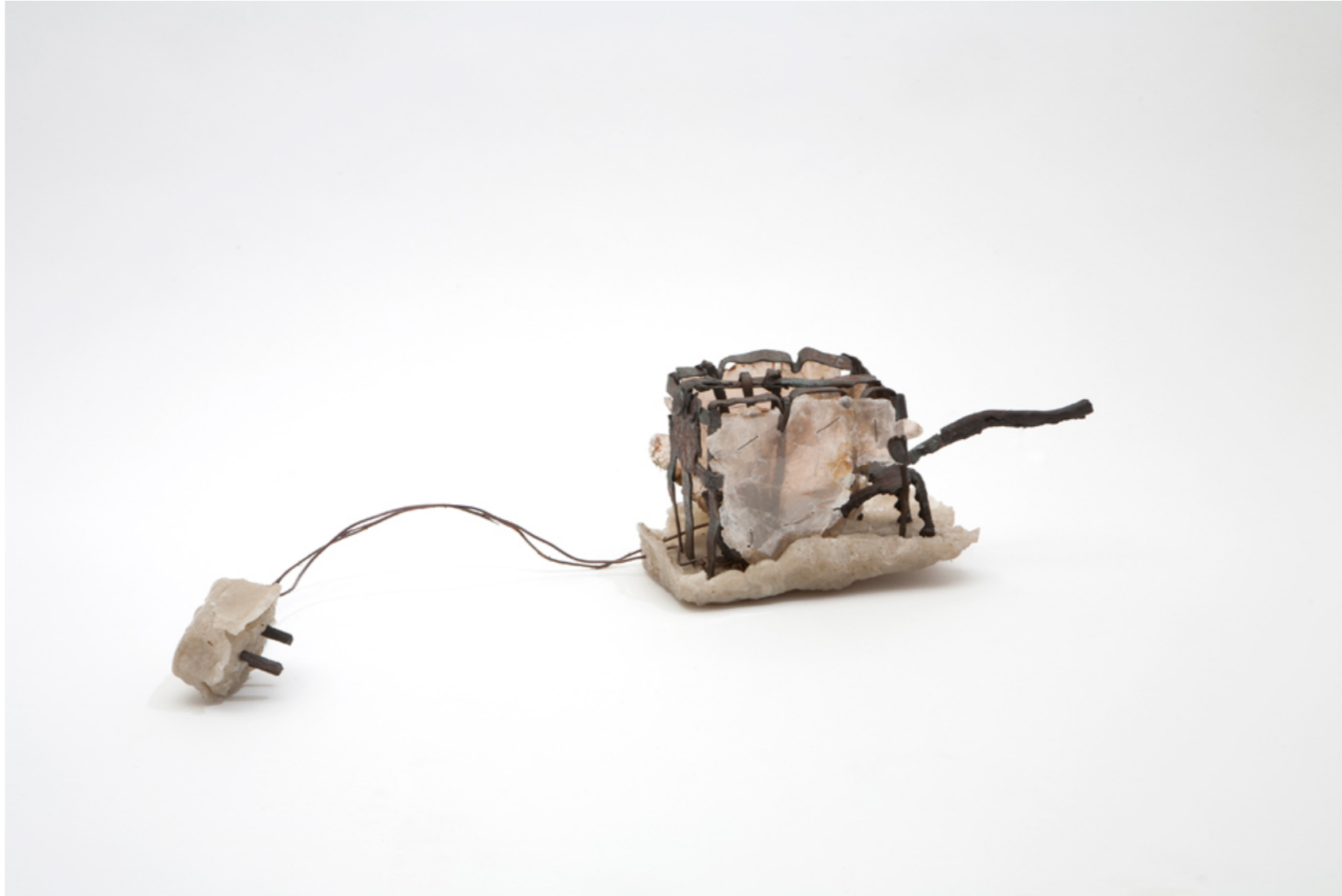
1.4 Examples of practice research



Lifelike appearance of cholecystectomy model © Roger Kneebone.

R E P O R T 1

1.4 *Examples of practice research*



Photograph of toaster as part of *The Toaster Project* by Thomas Thwaites. © Daniel Alexander 2009.

R E P O R T 1

1.5 Issues and challenges

- Hierarchies of knowledge and discrepancies in funding create disadvantages for practice researchers, especially for those on fractional contracts in HEIs and independent researchers.
- Conversations about practice research ought to include the perspective of researchers outside of the academy.
- The lack of sector-wide guidance on core aspects of practice research is of particular disadvantage to smaller institutions and independent researchers.
- Ethics is an underexplored area of practice research and further reports need to be undertaken on it.
- Practice research outputs should be made accessible to those with access needs and neurodiversity.
- To create a legacy of practice research, outputs should be made accessible and discoverable for both present and future generations.

REPORT 2

HOW CAN
PRACTICE
RESEARCH
be SHARED?

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2.1 *Structuring practice research*

- The compositional structure of a practice research output may vary depending on the research inquiry. In some cases a research narrative may be evident in the practice itself. In other cases an additional research narrative may be employed in parallel to the practice, or a research narrative incorporates documentation as a proxy for practice.
- For some practice researchers, it is useful to have reference guidelines for structuring a practice research output. An example compositional structure of an output may be:
 - (Summary / Abstract)
 - Context / Introduction
 - Research inquiry / Questions in practice
 - Method statements
 - Practice, description of practice, or documentation of practice (as a proxy)
 - Insights / Discussion of ways of knowing
 - Conclusion and references
- Practice research outputs are submitted to, rather than created for, research assessments such as the REF.

2.2 Item types for practice research

- The appropriate item type for a practice research output varies depending on the most effective way of presenting the research inquiry.
- Practice research outputs may be contained in any research item type, including book, book section, exhibition, journal article, performance or project.
- Item types other than books, book sections, journal articles and conference proceedings currently lack discoverability and interoperability with global research systems, hindering sharing.
- A ‘project’ item type may be adopted across global research systems, enhancing the discoverability of multi-component practice research outputs.
- Traditional methods of creating ‘editions’ can be employed for practice research outputs.

2.3 Formats and metadata

- The use of wide varieties of file formats for practice research outputs can be challenging for research support professionals and can hinder the dissemination and preservation of practice research.
- Discussion and further research is necessary surrounding recommended file formats for digital practice research outputs.
- Formats and metadata for practice research should comply with accessibility provision as set out by governing bodies, ensuring that research is accessible to audiences with disabilities and neurodiversity.
- Consideration ought to be made for the continuing importance of physical formats of practice research.
- For a practice research output, providing appropriate metadata ensures it is interoperable, accessible and discoverable.
- To support the collective research item type 'project,' there may be a need to develop new metadata standards, or update existing documentation.

2.4 *Peer review*

- Peer review is of utmost importance for the field of practice research: it acts to provide editorial assistance and assurance of ethical research, shareability, preservability and interoperability.
- Peer review can ensure that practice research meets the standards of the research community, and for audiences and funders it can build up trust in the overall body of practice research outputs.
- Current peer review systems for research publication, drawn from traditional science models, do not function well for the majority of practice research.
- Good practice in peer review of practice research for publication can be found in a small array of journals.
- A feasibility study exploring the potential of a model for peer review of practice research publication, linked to an *Open Library of Practice Research (OLPR)*, may be one route towards exploring the benefits and challenges of peer review and practice research.

2.5 Storing and preserving practice research outputs

- Substantial challenges exist in storing and preserving practice research outputs. These include a lack of: an agreed collective item type; interoperability of file formats and research item types; metadata standards.
- Guidance and standards for storing and preserving practice research outputs are needed to prevent scenarios such as the ‘REF graveyard’.
- Institutional repositories will continue to play a fundamental role in storing and preserving practice research outputs.
- Exploring the feasibility and potential of an *Open Library of Practice Research (OLPR)*, for harvesting and hosting peer-reviewed practice research publications, may be one avenue to consider in addressing the challenge of storing and preserving practice research outputs.
- The OLPR may act as an important resource for both current and future practice researchers.

2.6 Sharing practice research

- Institutional and independent research repositories are a cornerstone for making practice research outputs discoverable and interoperable.
- Persistent identifiers such as DOI names and ORCID iDs are fundamental in making practice research outputs interoperable.
- Metrics tools and citation indexes are currently not widely used for practice research outputs, but may be in future.
- Adopting Open Access tenets may provide the most efficient and ethical route for sharing practice research outputs.

2.7/2.8 Conclusions and Looking Forward

In addition to the considerations presented at the end of our first report *What is practice research?*, there are a number of activities that a practice research advisory body could undertake to help support the effective sharing of practice research outputs in the future:

- a) to explore the most appropriate formats for the generation, dissemination and preservation of practice research;
- b) to discuss the adoption of a collective ‘project’ research output item type across global research systems;
- c) to involve research support professionals, practice researchers and policymakers in developing guidance and recommendations for the long-term dissemination, preservation and storage of practice research;
- d) to explore the need and feasibility for a new peer review model for practice research publication;

2.7/2.8 Conclusions and Looking Forward

e) to commission further reporting surrounding practice research, Open Access and ethics;

f) to investigate the founding of an Open Library of Practice Research (OLPR). This open library would:

- i. harvest and host peer-reviewed practice research outputs;
- ii. provide specific support for the novel formulations of practice research that will emerge in future.
- iii. embody principles of Open Access.

Bulley, James and Şahin, Özden.

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