Makers in focus

Full report

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The working environment of West Midlands designer makers, craftspeople and applied artists at different stages of their careers.

Survey: 2003-04
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Makers in focus

A survey into the working environment of designer makers, craftspeople and applied artists at different stages of their careers, in the West Midlands.

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1 Executive summary

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The University of Wolverhampton and Arts Council England, West Midlands jointly set up and funded a three-year, part-time research fellowship with the aim of achieving a greater understanding of the needs of makers in the West Midlands region, their working lives and professional activities. It set out particularly to explore the regional retention of emerging graduates, strategies for attracting new makers to the West Midlands, and raising the profile of makers and the applied arts in the region.

1.1.2 *Makers in focus* is the first study of its kind to address the West Midlands as a whole, and aims to provide evidence in support of establishing a regional strategy for professional development. (Sections 4.1, 4.2)

1.1.3 The survey, *Makers in focus* was undertaken to explore current activity in the sector and to identify needs and gaps in the provision of professional development support. Separate questionnaires were sent to listed makers (ie those listed on a range of crafts databases, understood within the sector as providing registers of UK makers who are actively practising and marketing their work), and to emerging graduates (ie craft or design graduates emerging from five West Midlands higher educational institutions in 2003). (Sections 6.2.1, 6.2.2, 6.3.1, 6.4.1)

1.1.4 Recognising that people producing crafts use a varied terminology to describe themselves, this report deploys the term ‘maker’ to encompass practitioners who might variously describe themselves as craftspeople, designer makers and applied artists. (Section 3.6.1)

1.1.5 It deploys the term ‘market’ to refer not only to the processes by which craft or applied artworks are bought or sold, and the various contexts in which this activity takes place, but also to non-commercial opportunities and activities that expose makers to new experiences, new audiences, new work and new exhibition opportunities, and that result in the raising of their profiles. All of these activities collectively comprise ‘the economy’ of the applied arts sector. (Section 3.5.1)

1.2 Key points

1.2.1 **All of the major research conducted into makers’ lifestyles and working practices in the last decade characterises them as multi-tasking portfolio workers.**

Understanding makers in this way demands new definitions of professional success, and a shift in understanding of the requirements of effective professional development support for their professional and creative development. (Sections 4.6.1-4.6.3, 4.7.1, 4.7.2)

1.2.2 **It is a widely held view that generic business skills training is of limited value: makers do not usually associate themselves with business attitudes and lifestyles, even though they are clearly running small businesses.**

Professional development has to be relevant, specific, flexible, accessible and tailored to this attitude, lifestyle and approach if it is to be effective in delivering the business and entrepreneurial skills that makers require to be successful. (Sections 4.7.3-4.7.5)

1.2.3 **If most public investment in professional development is short-term, there is little or no prospect of sustained development, or proper exploitation or rolling out of good practice.**

Professional development continues to change and evolve, but the long-term potential of many initiatives is not being exploited: much short-term investment is limited in its effect and, ultimately, a wasteful use of public resource. (Sections 5.4.1-5.4.5)

1.2.4 **Whilst there are a number of models of good practice in the West Midlands, there has been limited consideration of how and to what extent *tailored* professional development provision is effectively aligned with the region's regeneration agenda.**

Despite growing governmental emphasis on graduate retention and encouraging the growth of small and medium enterprises, especially in relation to the creative industries, professional development tailored to the needs of makers remains relatively little engaged in the encouragement of entrepreneurship. (Sections 5.5.1, 9.2.1, 9.2.2)

1.2.5 **As matters currently stand, the majority of professional development has been created largely independently of consideration for the support and development of markets, or of development of any professional or creative opportunities and activities for makers. What makers want from professional development, above all else, is to enhance their capacity to develop new markets, especially new selling and exhibiting opportunities.** (Sections 5.5.4, 7.17.1-7.17.5)

1.2.6 Current thinking is not making the crucial connection between makers' primary, artistic motivation for their practices, the fundamental requirement to find a market outlet if they are to be successful, and the nature of professional development provision.

The survival and success of makers ultimately depends upon increasing the overall level of professional activity and business opportunities that are available to them. Without markets, makers and the craft sector do not exist. (Sections 7.16.1-7.16.3, 7.17.1-7.17.5, 7.18.1)

1.2.7 **Greater attempts need to be made to create imaginative programmes and schemes that appeal to makers, and which can produce positive, real and tangible benefits to practitioners and their role within the regional economy**. (Sections 5.6k, 5.6m, 9.3.5, 9.4.1, 9.4.1a-g)

1.2.8 **Partnerships and collaborations between professional development providers and arts organisations and agencies are essential to the survival and profiling of professional development initiatives.** (Sections 5.4.5, 5.6.g, 9.2 9.2.1, 9.2.4, 9.3.7).

1.2.9 **Higher educational institutions have not yet fulfilled their potential to play a significant role in the development of professional development provision and in the West Midlands' retention of emerging makers**. (Sections 2.5, 2.6, 5.6h)

1.2.10 **Successful professional development schemes play a direct role in raising the profile of makers, and of the region as a worthwhile place for makers to base themselves and their businesses.** (Sections 5.6m, 8.3.1, 8.3.2)

1.2.11 **The loss of young graduates from the region is alarming given the West Midlands' very strong tradition and international reputation for design, making and manufacturing in ceramics in Stoke-on-Trent, and jewellery in Birmingham.** (Sections 8.1.1, 8.2.3)

1.2.12 **Arts Council England, West Midlands' declining capacity and flexibility to make direct strategic investment in the sector, and the fragmented nature of existing professional development provision, is of considerable significance to the region's performance and potential as an attractive base for makers.** (Sections 9.3.1-9.3.3)

1.2.13 **Listed makers in the West Midlands are mostly female, work from home, practise in a rural area and have portfolio careers, juggling several professional activities at once.**

Their participation rate in professional development activities is low, with 41% having undertaken no such activity in the last three years. Makers living in rural areas are less likely to be involved in professional development activity than makers in urban areas. (Sections 7.1.2, 7.1.3, 7.4.1, 7.6, 7.6.1-7.6.5, 7.8.3, 7.9.1-7.9.3)

1.2.14 **Listed makers want to find and take advantage of professional development opportunities and activities.**

Participation in mentoring schemes and critical debate - types of development currently favoured by providers in other parts of the country - are not rated highly. Instead, makers value support to enable them to access a wider range of regional, national and international opportunities and activities. (Sections 7.17-7.17.8)

1.2.15 **Makers continue to use newsletters more than the internet as a source of information.**

They value sourcing information by means of arts and crafts publications; they also value peer group networking through makers' groups or guilds, which are viewed as a means to overcome isolation at work. (Sections 7.14-7.14.4, 8.15, 8.15.1, 8.16-8.16.4)

1.2.16 **Emerging makers are invisible and under-represented on databases.**

Only 5% of respondents who were listed makers and practising for two years or less, and 21% of respondents who were graduates emerging from the region's higher educational institutions, appeared on crafts databases or lists. (Sections 7.7, 7.7.1, 7.7.5, 8.16.1)

1.2.17 **Those emerging makers who are listed on databases (and therefore visible) are very active.**

The nine (5%) respondents who fall into this category and who have been practising for 0-2 years are very proactive and entrepreneurial, with eight having made successful funding applications in support of their practices and all selling and exhibiting work while sustaining portfolio careers. (Sections 7.7.2-7.7.4)

1.2.18 **Listed makers in the region are generally pro-active in selling and exhibiting their work.**

Galleries, shops, craft fairs and private commissions are the most cited outlets. (Sections 7.10, 7.10.1, 7.11-7.11.3)

1.2.19 **For over half of West Midlands makers, the region does not provide a big enough market for their work and national markets are their main targets.** (Section 7.10.2)

1.2.20 **Makers selling in the region are not reliant on the tourist trade: their customers are local people.** (Sections 7.10.5, 7.10.6)

1.2.21 **West Midlands makers are already proactive in accessing international markets.**

They identify developing new opportunities internationally as one of the three most necessary areas of support if they are to further the success and growth of their practices. (Sections 7.11.6, 7.11.7)

1.2.22 **Listed makers are primarily concerned with making and their creativity needs nurturing.**

Makers identify the need to have more time to develop and explore their creative work as well as to develop market opportunities in the region, nationally and internationally. Government focus on economic development and the creative industries has meant a greater emphasis on business and productivity and less emphasis on the nurturing of creativity. Makers want to produce high quality work and future professional development policies should take this into consideration. (Sections 5.5.4-5.5.6, 7.16-7.16.4, 7.17 - 7.17.2, 7.18, 7.18.1, 9.4, 9.4.1)

1.2.23 **Were additional finance available, emerging graduates would first want to invest in the purchase of equipment, the purchase of raw materials and studio premises.**

These are the basic, fundamental needs of a maker wanting to start up a studio. Investing in business training is identified as the second stage of setting up a business. (Section 8.12.4)

1.2.24 **West Midlands makers' turnover appears to be significantly lower than the national average.**

The mean average turnover for a full-time craftsperson in the West Midlands is £15,000 less than the average turnover in England and Wales, which is £35,000 per annum. (Section 7.15.3, 7.15.4)

1.2.25 **Based on individuals' estimated mean turnover, West Midlands makers generate an estimated £32 million per annum**. (Section 7.15.3)

1.2.26 **The average annual turnover for a full-time female maker is over £9,000 less than her male counterpart.** (Section 7.15.7)

1.2.27 Unlike listed makers, emerging graduates tend to live in urban areas. The majority are female, with textiles the most represented craftform.

Almost a third of those studying at the region's universities move away from the region on graduating. (Sections 8.1, 8.1.1, 8.2, 8.21)

1.2.28 **The majority of graduates have received professional development support as an element of their BA study, and professional development seems to be valued.**

After graduation, over half continue actively to research professional development opportunities, but a quarter are not aware of any professional development opportunities offered within their region. (Sections 8.3.1, 8.3.3, 8.9.1, 8.9.2)

1.2.29 **Exhibiting at *New Designers* is a positive learning experience for emerging graduates.**

They gain valuable professional and business contacts, skills and knowledge within a live professional context. (Sections 8.4, 8.4.1)

1.2.30 **Emerging graduates show early signs of entrepreneurship.**

They seem to be motivated, with one third of them accessing UK markets as early as five months after leaving university. However they want support, identifying their needs as attainment of a reasonably priced studio and financial assistance with business start-up costs (including the acquisition of materials and equipment). (Sections 8.10, 8.10.1, 8.12.4, 8.13 - 8.13.2)

1.2.31 **A rethink of professional development provision is needed in the light of the survey's findings.**

Providers must reconsider their current attitudes to professional development, and place new emphasis upon how they can contribute to the development of markets and other professional opportunities for makers. Makers are not accessing markets to their full potential, and their current market share is unnecessarily limited for want of appropriate advice, assistance and support. (Sections 7.12-7.12.3, 7.17–7.17.4, 9.4.1a-g)

1.2.32 **Professional development is reliant on short-term funding.**

This impacts negatively on providers' capacity to build on their knowledge and experience and, consequently, upon both regional and national capacity to deepen and strengthen professional development support and provision. (Sections 9.3.4-9.3.6)

1.2.33 **Whilst the research has identified some models of good practice in professional development provision in the region, activity is un-coordinated.**

A coordinating, strategic regional framework is needed to build on existing strengths and to promote and enhance the capacity of the region's makers to access international and national activity and opportunities. (Sections 2-2.6, 9.2, 9.2.1, 9.2.4, 9.3.5-9.3.7)

2 Strategy and recommendations

- Development of a region-wide infrastructure for professional development: recommendations and action points

- Creating a dynamic, supportive culture for makers, their practices and their markets: recommendations and action points

- The role of higher education: recommendations and action points

2.1 Development of a region-wide infrastructure for professional development: recommendations

a) National mapping undertaken during the early stages of the fellowship highlighted the value of partnerships and collaborations to successful, strategic development and delivery of professional development.

b) A West Midlands professional development framework for the applied arts is needed if a cohesive regional professional development infrastructure is to be created. This should be effected through formation of an independent consortium comprising existing professional development organisations in the region. The consortium would aim to build on existing strengths, share skills, expertise and resources, maximise collective effectiveness, eradicate duplication and address gaps in provision. To ensure the involvement of the rural and sub regions, members should be broadly representative of all areas of the West Midlands. The consortium's aim should be to support makers' success in regional, national and international markets through development and implementation of a strategic direction for professional development provision.

c) Key players in the consortium:

- Arts Council England, West Midlands
- Advantage West Midlands
- arts development agencies
- arts and crafts organisations
- higher educational institutions
- existing professional development providers
- galleries
- local authorities

d) The aims of a crafts professional development framework in the West Midlands region:

- advocate for professional development
- articulate a future direction for professional development
- broker partnership funding and develop a funding strategy for professional development provision
- achieve an effective means of distributing professional development information and opportunities

- provide a virtual ‘centre’ for professional development activity and provision
- deliver support to makers through strategic professional development initiatives
- ensure effective links between urban, rural and local areas

2.2 Development of a region-wide infrastructure for professional development: action points

a) Appoint a paid project manager to coordinate the consortium and lead on professional development initiatives and recommendations.

b) Identify named representatives of potential consortium member organisations and begin by establishing a mechanism for pooling information resources and databases.

c) Identify appropriate organisational and staff structure for an independent consortium.

d) Disseminate summary of key points from the *Makers in focus* report to West Midlands professional development organisations, development agencies, local authorities and higher educational institutions.

e) Monitor makers’ needs on an ongoing basis to maintain an appropriate and effective balance of provision across the region and to achieve introduction of new, additional provision where necessary.

f) Develop and maintain a regional database of makers, including all recent applied arts graduates from the region’s higher educational institutions, to ensure effective communication to makers.

g) Develop a website with links regionally, nationally and internationally (possibly to be achieved through partnership with *CreativePeople*).

h) Promote professional development through conferences and other appropriate professional forums.

i) Broker partnership funding for the implementation of this report’s recommendations and associated professional development initiatives.

2.3 Creating a dynamic, supportive culture for makers, their practices and their markets: recommendations

a) Makers’ development is dependent upon their being aware of both the market and professional development opportunities that are potentially available to them. Coordinated, effective communication on the part of institutions, organisations and providers with an interest in developing and sustaining a flourishing, entrepreneurial community of makers in the region is therefore essential.

b) To this end, achieving and maintaining visibility for emerging graduates is key, as is providing appropriate, effective support for start-up of their businesses and ongoing, integral development of their creative practices.

c) More established makers need assistance to revitalise their businesses, including making time to extend their work creatively.

d) All makers need access to appropriate and often highly specialised equipment; equally, they need support to expand and grow their markets, and to promote their work successfully regionally, nationally and internationally.

e) Rural makers need particular consideration to ensure that they are able to access opportunities and expertise perhaps more readily available to practitioners located in the region's urban centres.

2.4 Creating a dynamic, supportive culture for makers, their practices and their markets: action points

a) Disseminate the key findings of *Makers in focus* through makers' guilds, associations, groups and national publications.

b) Develop and maintain a West Midlands database of makers and professional development providers.

c) Develop a dedicated professional development website or newsletter to provide information and advice to West Midlands makers on regional, national and international markets and funding.

d) Develop professional development conferences and seminar days in support of makers' creative, professional and entrepreneurial development.

e) Assist and encourage studio groups to network informally regionally, nationally and internationally.

f) Assist and encourage studio groups to develop their own websites to showcase makers' work.

g) Support existing guilds and makers' groups to develop and promote new events and activities to attract emerging makers.

h) Develop student and emerging makers' membership of associations, guilds and groups.

i) Deploy *New Designers* as a forum for recruitment and as a launch pad for initiatives specifically tailored to the needs of emerging makers.

j) Implement a research project into the development of studio provision for emerging graduates and makers, towards encouraging graduate retention within the region.

k) Undertake action research projects into the development and implementation of makers' market opportunities regionally, nationally and internationally.

Suggested projects to focus on the development of public art and opportunities for mid-career makers.

l) Expand West Midlands higher educational institutions' participation in the national *Artists Access to Art Colleges* (AA2A) scheme.

m) Support new studio groups to share resources.

n) Increase training provision offering practical support and advice to makers to develop promotional tools.

o) Develop a programme of partnerships between higher educational institutions and other organisations to develop makers' access to studios, equipment, materials, networking and training, in a supportive environment. Each partnership could provide a regional focus for a particular craft discipline.

p) Negotiate partnerships with national organisations to develop greater participation in national selling and exhibiting opportunities.

q) Support access to, and the development of, regional, national and international opportunities for makers.

r) Stage a national conference on the development of markets and opportunities for makers.

2.5 The role of higher education: recommendations

a) Achievement of a flourishing crafts sector within the West Midlands, which can make a growing contribution to regional regeneration, is highly dependent upon rendering the region a more attractive environment for young makers and their businesses. In part, this will involve growing its capacity to retain graduates emerging from its higher educational institutions, and enhancing those graduates' professional and entrepreneurial effectiveness.

b) In this context, higher educational institutions' effective delivery of professional development to their students becomes crucial, as does achievement of greater support structures for young graduates once they leave to enter professional practice.

c) Higher educational institutions should also be recognised as offering significant and largely untapped potential for playing a greater role in professional development provision overall. Within the broad understanding and remit of professional development that this report advocates, they should be understood to be key players in the development of the crafts sector in the region. Through partnerships and collaborations with other organisations, they can make a significant contribution to the infrastructural resource that, through effective, region-wide coordination, can be unlocked in the service of makers' development.

2.6 The role of higher education: action points

a. Embed professional development as an overt and integrated element of all BA and MA courses.

b. Develop ‘follow up’ schemes, in partnership with external, specialist organisations, to support emerging graduates to follow up and capitalise upon contacts achieved at *New Designers.*

c. Work in partnership with other providers to achieve networking and other professional development events and schemes suitable for emerging and established makers in the region.

d. Play a greater role in non-accredited professional development provision.

e. Develop a partnership scheme between higher educational institutions and other organisations to create supportive environments through which makers can access studios, equipment, materials, networking and training. Each partnership could provide a regional focus for a particular craft discipline.

f. Look to *Next Move* and existing North West and North Yorkshire schemes for models of some aspects of the above proposals.

3 Introduction

3.1 Heather Rigg's three year Fellowship in Professional Development for the Applied Arts was hosted by the University of Wolverhampton from 2002-05, and resulted in a major regional research survey, *Makers in focus.* Jointly funded by Arts Council England, West Midlands and the university, the fellowship represented their shared commitment to supporting the knowledge, skills, opportunities and professionalism of craftspeople in the West Midlands region.

3.2 Aims and purpose of the fellowship

3.2.1 The aim of the fellowship was to improve knowledge and understanding of the needs of makers, their working lives and professional activities. This was intended to facilitate subsequent initiatives to promote the creative and professional growth of the region's makers. The primary objective was to achieve information and analysis that would provide a sound and convincing evidence base from which to formulate a strategy, and to make recommendations for the future development of professional development support in the West Midlands.

3.3 Why professional development? A brief, recent history of thinking about the value and role of makers' activity

3.3.1 Professional development provides a critical means of supporting and promoting emerging graduates and practising makers, enabling them to gain skills and knowledge to equip them for employment and career advancement, and thereby also providing for the continuation of a healthy and thriving crafts sector.

3.3.2 Research undertaken in the 1990s and earlier had shown that graduates were leaving art and design colleges without any preparation for employment or self-employment (Harvey and Blackwell, 1999). Greater numbers of art and design graduates were entering self-employment than graduates from other disciplines, but they lacked professional skills and understanding of the realities of independent practice. (Press, 1996)

3.3.3 Through research into the career destinations of art and design graduates, it became clear that it was imperative to improve the career usefulness of art, design and craft training and to make graduates more competitive, both within the art, craft and design industries and within the broader labour market. (Harvey and Blackwell, 1999)

3.3.4 The message from a student studying in a London higher educational institution was loud and clear:

'give us a realistic view of the outside world and teach us the skills which help us access opportunities after we leave.'
(Breakwell, 1997)

3.3.5 Something had to be done to support makers to become skilled and effective in what they did after leaving university, to promote greater success and growth for art and design graduates generally and, in particular, for those entering the craft sector.

3.3.6 Alongside the growing dissatisfaction of art and design undergraduates with their professional preparation came the establishment of creativity and culture as a national priority (Crafts Council, 1998), and growing emphasis upon the 'creative industries' within national and regional regeneration and economic development agendas. The conjunction of these various factors made it logical for new emphasis to be placed upon professional development activity as a means of encouraging entrepreneurship, addressing the needs of graduates and supporting the future health and survival of the craft sector.

3.3.7 Research in the 1990s recognised the social contribution of the crafts made through their capacity to empower people through self expression, to offer activity which counteracted the stresses of life, and to provide a means of supporting identity. Later research emphasised the importance of acknowledging the craft sector's contribution to the economy, its contribution to culture and education, and its impact upon environment and quality of life. (Press 1996, Press and Cusworth, 1998, McAuley and Filis, 2004)

3.3.8 Most recently, the Government has identified the creative industries as the fastest growing economic sector, and acknowledged the importance of the financial contribution of the crafts (as part of the creative industries) to the wider economy. (McAuley and Fillis, 2004):

'[…] *it is also crucial to recognise that the sector makes a vital contribution to the wider economy. The sector does this through:*

- *its relationship to the tourism industry*
- *its role within the creative industries sector*
- *its role in sustaining rural economies*
- *its role as a source of creativity and innovation*
- *its role as a focus for entrepreneurial activity*
- *providing the opportunity for indigenous small firm growth'*

3.4 Professional development: an interpretation

3.4.1 For the purposes of *Makers in focus*, professional development is defined in the broadest possible terms, and taken to mean anything that develops the professionalism of the maker. This broad definition encompasses formal provision in support of: networking; skills training; business development; product development; one-to-one advice; signposting of information; mentoring; critical debate; access to resources; the development of creativity; fundraising; marketing and promotional activities.

3.5 The market: an interpretation

3.5.1 For the purpose of *Makers in focus*, the term 'market' is used to refer not only to the processes by which craft/applied art works are bought or sold, and the various contexts in which this activity takes place, but also to non-commercial opportunities and activities that expose makers to new experiences, new audiences, new work and new exhibition opportunities, and that result in the raising of their profiles. All of these activities, collectively, can be seen to comprise 'the economy' of the applied arts sector.

3.6 Craft practitioners

3.6.1 *Makers in focus* recognises that people making crafts use a varied terminology to describe themselves. For the purposes of this report, the term 'maker' is deployed to encompass practitioners who might variously describe themselves as craftspeople, designer makers and applied artists.

3.7 Craftwork

3.7.1 Makers practice in many and various ways. Their output can range from 'one off' pieces to batch production, or they can produce in some combination of these two 'modes'. They can either be responsible for the whole creating process - from the idea or design stage through to the making and the completed product - or they can work with their original designs to produce finished pieces in collaboration with others. Their work can be 'contemporary' in style or more traditional; it can be functional or non-functional.

3.7.2 The diversity of contemporary practice, and the trajectory of diversification that has taken place in the applied arts over the last century or so, is complex to map and describe. *Makers in focus* does not aim to define the work created by craftspeople, but rather merely to acknowledge its breadth and diversity and to encompass the implications of this within its advocacy for a revised, more coherent and strategic approach to professional development within the region.

3.8 Listed makers

3.8.1 The term 'listed makers' refers to those makers in the region who are included on a range of crafts databases or lists, the membership of which is generally understood to indicate makers' active engagement with practising and marketing their work. These databases are sustained by public bodies or are a product of maker-led membership associations. They are widely understood to provide a key source of information for anyone wishing to search for, employ, or contact UK makers.

4 The context of the research

4.1 This report represents the findings of three years' research into the working lives and creative practices of makers in the West Midlands and included, in September 2003, a major survey of practitioners, *Makers in focus.* Until now, there has been little or no distinct regional research into makers' professional circumstances, other than some published studies of the sub-regions (ArtAgents, 2000; *Creative Industries in Herefordshire*, Jayne and Bell, 2002; Kidd and Kumiega, SMSR Ltd, 2002).

4.2 *Makers in focus* is the first study of its kind to address the region as a whole, its aim being to gain greater understanding of makers' needs, their markets, selling activities and creative practices, and to establish a future direction for professional development support. Effective regional strategies and policies will be possible only if they are based on hard evidence of the kind that, formerly, has not been available, and which research conducted through the fellowship has set out to provide.

4.3 The crafts sector

4.3.1 The crafts sector is diverse, not only in the range of disciplines that it encompasses, but also in the range of incomes, types of work, geographical locations, maturity of practice and market channels that characterise makers' situations and professional careers. Key characteristics of practitioners in the sector are that they are committed, flexible, multi-skilled, lifestyle orientated, entrepreneurial, self-motivated and independent. The sector is overwhelmingly populated by micro-businesses, and defined by portfolio style working, networking and by output that is profitable yet retains artistic merit.

4.3.2 The Government has identified the creative industries as the fastest growing economic sector and, within the creative industries, recognises the contribution that the crafts make to the wider economy:

'The creative industries are growing at (sic) *almost twice as fast as any other sector in the economy.'*
(Estelle Morris interview with Mark Lawson, *Front Row*, BBC Radio 4, 2004)

4.3.3 This focus on the creative industries, coupled with increasingly clear identification of issues that most concern creative businesses, has resulted in the crafts not only enjoying an increasingly high profile, but also growing emphasis on makers' access to finance and skills development, and to exporting to overseas markets.

4.4 Professional development and higher education

4.4.1 Professional development has been a topic of discussion amongst higher educational institutions and arts organisations for over a decade. In the mid 1990s, professional development was tentatively introduced into the curriculum in some higher educational institutions offering courses in art and design. Initially introduced as an optional extra within the curriculum, without involving any summative assessment, it was greeted by academics with a degree of reluctance. At worst, it was seen as taking up valuable studio time and as a non-academic subject more appropriately positioned as a vocational topic to be delivered through further education. For whatever reason, professional development was embraced by higher educational institutions only relatively slowly:

'[…] *career guidance was not seen as an important element of graduates' education and this may reflect the fact that in most areas it is not integrated into the curriculum.'*
(Harvey and Blackwell, 1999)

4.4.2 Graduates, nonetheless, subsequently valued the professional development that they had received:

'[…] *graduates also regard business or professional studies components as valuable, especially for career development. The problem for many graduates was that this was an element lacking on their courses.'*
(Harvey and Blackwell, 1999)

4.4.3 The Crafts Council seminally promoted the need for professional development through its series of conferences: *Crafts 2000. A future in the making, 1997*; *Learning Through Making*; and *Making a Living 1998*. These provided an important opportunity for the dissemination of significant research by professional development professionals and researchers on higher educational institutions' lack of provision for undergraduates and on the need to support emerging makers after graduation.

4.4.4 A number of research surveys emerging from these Crafts Council conferences focused on employment, career development, skills and knowledge, and upon how education had or had not equipped emerging makers in these respects. Surveys confirmed that craft courses scored highly in providing students with creative, critical and problem solving skills, but that the same courses were less successful in areas concerned with business skills and career development.

4.4.5 It was also recognised that, despite the potential of art and design courses, graduates were hindered by a lack of support in developing skills in areas such as team working, self-promotion, written communication and numeracy. (Breakwell, 1997 and Press and Cusworth, 1998)

4.4.6 Further research was undertaken to address this problem, and recommendations were made to promote a model for successfully encouraging entrepreneurship amongst design and craft graduates (Ball and Price, 1999). The aim was to:

'[…] *develop the higher education curriculum to increase graduates' understanding of the environment in which they work, the entrepreneurial qualities and skills required, and their own potential for self employment.'*
(Ball and Price, 1999)

4.4.7 The result was a model of good practice and a framework for higher educational institutions to follow, which clearly defined the support needed to prepare undergraduates for life after university and the requirements of employment. Slowly, professional development has now become established within a number of art and design courses, operating at its best as an integral element of undergraduate and postgraduate modular programmes - compulsory, assessed and valued.

4.5 Career development

4.5.1 Key research, in 1999, into the careers of British art, craft and design graduates established that they tend to take longer to develop a career than do other kinds of graduates. Their career paths are more complex and many pursue several jobs simultaneously in the early stages after leaving university:

‘The range of salaried work and self employment is also likely to be augmented by further training or study and by voluntary work and punctuated by short periods of unemployment.’
(Harvey and Blackwell, 1999)

4.5.2 The same research established that 3D Design graduates were most likely to be self-employed after graduation, and a third had been involved with some sort of lecturing or teaching:

‘Several months following graduation 48% of craft graduates were unemployed, but this pattern changed over time and unemployment fell to 7%.’
(Press and Cusworth, 1998)

4.6 Portfolio careers

4.6.1 Makers need to be multi-skilled to be able to develop careers beyond the specialised activity of creating and making. As research has shown, not all of these skills are generally gained as part of degree courses in higher education (Ball and Price, 1999). The lack of a defined career path, low levels of income and the often solitary nature of recent graduates’ working lives make it very difficult for emerging makers to develop professionally.

4.6.2 It has been acknowledged in previous research reports that makers survive by operating portfolio style careers or businesses, juggling the requirements of a number of activities or jobs alongside their creative practices:

‘Half of those in the survey have undertaken at least two different forms of work at the same time at some point in their careers, and 46% of those currently self employed are job-juggling multi-trackers.’
(Press and Cusworth, 1998)

4.6.3 The nature of these activities varies, but they usually provide an additional source of income and are usually indirectly or directly related to makers’ creative practice. Examples range from teaching, to running workshops in a community setting, to consultancy work for industry:

'This person currently has four jobs on the go – managing a joint craft studio, producing jewellery for commission, doing computer based graphic design and working as a part-time technician in a college.
(Press and Cusworth, 1998)'

4.7 Lifestyle, attitude and tailored professional development

4.7.1 Research into portfolio working has revealed that career growth may happen outside what a maker describes as their main business and, instead, be associated with the other activities and opportunities that are pursued alongside creative practice. (Ball and Price, 1999)

4.7.2 The same research suggests that there is a need for complementary activities, which can enrich and enhance makers' capacity to conduct and exploit their creative practice. This kind of activity supports makers' ability to be multi-skilled, flexible, adaptable entrepreneurs who can meet the demands of different markets, opportunities, activities, jobs and customers. The emergence of this type of lifestyle and work style has required new definitions of success and a shift in understanding of the requirements of support for makers' professional and personal needs.

4.7.3 The *Connections and Collaborations* research report (Falmouth College of Art and Dartington College of Arts, 2004) includes information on what artists thought professional development providers were currently doing right: ie offering affordable and high quality provision, which was relevant to individual practice. This confirms a widespread belief within the sector that good professional development provision for makers must be individually tailored, directly relevant to individuals' practices, and specific to their work and markets.

4.7.4 Generic business skills training is widely perceived within the sector to be less useful and appropriate: makers do not usually associate themselves with business attitudes and lifestyles, even though they are clearly running small businesses. Makers primarily make work because they are committed to their creative practices, not because they see them as a profitable enterprise, and they tend to be unwilling to sacrifice quality and aesthetics for greater financial gain. Professional development has to be relevant, specific, flexible, accessible and tailored to this attitude, lifestyle and approach if it is to be effective in delivering the business and entrepreneurial skills that makers, require to be successful.

4.7.5 The sector's criticisms of generic business skills training are difficult to substantiate through the findings of published research. However, national mapping conducted for this fellowship – much of which was achieved through face-to-face interviews – found such criticisms to be widespread. Many current national sources of investment in delivery of professional development are tied to delivery of such training.

4.8 Priorities for the fellowship research and for the West Midlands

4.8.1 After a decade of provision, how has professional development developed, nationally? Research for *Makers in focus* has shown that traditional short business skills training courses have proliferated in the West Midlands. Elsewhere, however, there has been a different emphasis, with professional development expanding to encompass mentoring, one-to-one advice, provision of resources, incubator schemes, signposting of information, networking events and more:

'Short course and one-off seminar or conference provision, however, was being out-stripped by the creation of new types of continuous professional development opportunities such as incubation, business support, networking groups and mentoring.'
(Falmouth College of Arts and Dartington College of Arts, 2004)

The current situation, in all its diversity, has raised a number of questions for the fellowship. For example:

- Where are the strengths of professional development now, after ten years' development, and what should be the direction of future provision?
- What is currently available in the West Midlands?
- Are the needs of the West Midlands unique, or are they broadly similar to those of other regions?
- What do makers want and is that necessarily synonymous with what they need?
- Are new graduates provided with the 'right' kind of professional development?
- What provision is there for the mid career and the established maker?
- Has the full potential of higher education involvement in professional development been realised?
- Is professional development adequately available to rural makers?

5 Mapping the professional development provision for makers in England: background research to *Makers in focus*

5.1 Mainly with a view to taking stock, and to searching for models of good practice, a mapping of existing professional development provision for makers in England was undertaken in 2002, prior to conducting the regional survey, *Makers in focus*.

5.2 Aims and objectives

5.2.1 The aims of the mapping exercise were to achieve the widest possible perspective on emerging trends and current approaches to professional development for makers beyond graduation, and to gain greater understanding and knowledge of providers and provision. Mapping took into account all of the English regions, as defined by Arts Council England.

5.2.2 Its objective was to inform more specific research of professional development in the West Midlands region. It aimed to identify models of good practice to enable assessment of their potential applicability within the region. Models were identified and considered bearing in mind the fellowship's particular interests in regional retention of emerging graduates, in strategies for attracting new makers to the region, and in raising the profile of makers and the applied arts in the West Midlands.

5.3 Materials and methods

5.3.1 To achieve the objective of the mapping exercise, the following research methods, materials and sources were used:

- internet searches
- email and telephone consultation with regional offices of Arts Council England
- screening of relevant newsletters and magazines, such as AN magazine, Crafts Magazine, Arts Council newsletters, Crafts Council Makers News
- attendance at relevant forums and symposiums, eg Artists' Professional Development Forum (one session of which was hosted by the University of Wolverhampton)
- face-to-face consultation with providers
- telephone interviews with providers

5.4 Summary of findings

Funding

5.4.1 Because of the precarious nature of much public investment in training and the arts, most professional development schemes have a limited life. (Schemes that do continue tend to survive only through the committed perseverance of providers: they are required regularly to restate their case and to re-apply for their funding.)

5.4.2 Professional development providers for the creative industries, including the crafts, are thus largely forced to work within the constraints of a pilot funding culture.

Design Space 2000, a scheme based in Birmingham, is an example of a highly successful incubator scheme that ran for only two years due to its inability to secure funding to continue. Offering studio space, training and advice, and having previously operated under other names, it had ‘reinvented’ itself as *Design Space 2000* in the year 2000 in order to access new income streams. Its loss is widely regarded as a significantly retrograde step in the development of the region as a supportive and nurturing environment for applied arts small and medium enterprises.

5.4.3 Collection and evaluation of data from a pilot scheme can be an effective way of testing new approaches and of securing evidence that makes the case for more permanent provision. However, if most public investment is short-term and therefore confined to pilot projects, there is little or no prospect of sustained development, or proper exploitation or rolling out of good practice. The mapping exercise provided ample evidence that professional development continues to change and evolve, but there was equally strong evidence that, because of the short-term nature of most public investment, the long-term potential of many initiatives was not being exploited.

5.4.4 Without continuity, the professional development understanding and expertise gained through successful short-term schemes cannot be built upon. This results in a lack of accumulated knowledge and cohesive direction, and lack of any recognisable, widely understood structure of provision; it also means wasted opportunities for research and progression. In consequence, the long-term value of much of the short-term investment that has been made is limited and, this report suggests, ultimately a wasteful use of public resource.

5.4.5 Those initiatives that have managed to sustain activity beyond the short-term appear largely to have done so through entering into organisational partnerships and collaborations, through sharing resources and knowledge, and through collaborative promotional initiatives. The evidence suggests that collaboration in these ways is important to achieving continuity of funding and, ultimately, to the sustained growth and development of professional development activity.

Communication of professional development provision

5.4.6 The fellowship’s mapping of professional development provision was undertaken in 2002-3 when the Arts Council of England and the regional arts boards were in the process of changing from an 11 organisation national arts funding system into a single body, Arts Council England. Researching professional development provision proved to be difficult because a number of regional arts boards did not provide accurate information about, or signpost, professional development opportunities on their websites. This raised the question of where makers were able to turn in order to research professional development opportunities, regionally and nationally – a question which remains apposite in spring 2005.

5.4.7 Across the country, there exists a number of key players in the provision and delivery of professional development support, but no single organisation is taking the responsibility, nationally, for provision for the applied arts.

5.4.8 During the three years of the fellowship, the new national digital signposting initiative, *CreativePeople* was in the making. Yet to prove itself as a model, *CreativePeople* is intended as a service for arts and craft practitioners and is a national, virtual network of organisations targeted to be achieved by 2006. It is envisaged that all network organisations will supply training and professional development information, and a wide range of advice and guidance. Each participating organisation will be operating in partnership with regional, artform or special-interest groups.

5.4.9 One of the participating organisations is the Crafts Council, which is heading up a collaboration of over 30 organisations collectively comprising the 'Crafts Consortium'. The Consortium will aim to provide information and signposting services to makers, nationally.

The main types of formal provision in England

5.4.10 The main types of formal provision identified by the mapping exercise were:

- *information provision and signposting of professional development courses, events and opportunities*: mainly through websites, email, newsletters, publications, resource centres and word of mouth
- *traditional skills training*: predominately business skills-based seminars and short courses
- *mentoring schemes*: one-to-one support for a small number of selected makers, continually over a period of time
- *networking*: usually one-day events, giving makers the opportunity to make contacts and gain information
- *resources*: provision of, for example, equipment, studio facilities, funding
- *individual advice*: mainly bookable, hourly one-to-one advice sessions from professional experts
- *critical debate*: small group discussions on creative work and sometimes concerning the marketing of craftwork
- *product development*: support to develop markets and opportunities

5.4.11 Provision was further defined by the following characteristics:

- both selective and open application is operated in relation to all types of provision
- eligibility to access provision may be determined by career length – eg makers starting out, or mid-career makers
- providers may offer one or several types of professional development support within the framework of a single scheme

5.4.12 When the mapping exercise was conducted, traditional training seminars appeared to be least popular with providers, and there seemed to be growth in the provision of mentoring schemes and critical debate. This growth could have been a result either of providers' changing assessment of makers' needs, or of makers' own articulation of their requirements. Alternatively, it could merely signal changing fashions of provision.

5.4.13 Research subsequently conducted through the *Makers in focus* survey suggests the latter to be more likely (sections 7.17.6-7.17.8). The mapping exercise did, nonetheless, seem to suggest some change from a traditionally dominant pattern of 'top down' provision to a more 'bottom up' approach, with makers being increasingly proactive in determining the nature of professional development provision.

5.5 Key ideas and discussion underpinning development of the *Makers in focus* survey

5.5.1 The mapping exercise proved pivotal in informing the next stage of the research. It had demonstrated that, whilst there were a number of models of good practice in the West Midlands, there appeared to have been limited consideration of how and to what extent provision was aligned with the region's regeneration agenda. Despite growing governmental emphasis on graduate retention and encouraging the growth of small and medium enterprises, especially in relation to the creative industries, *tailored* professional development was relatively little engaged in the encouragement of entrepreneurship. If a strategic, effective approach were to be taken to the latter, it would be vital to achieve in-depth understanding of makers' aspirations and desires for their practices, and of their own views concerning their existing and potential markets.

5.5.2 This prompted the key question of whether existing UK approaches to professional development provision offered a suitable way forward for development in the West Midlands, or whether some new thinking would be required if real progress were to be made in nurturing and developing the entrepreneurial and creative cultures of the region's applied arts base.

5.5.3 Much professional development activity is based on the assumption that, if makers are provided with skills training and information, this will automatically assist them to find, successfully enter, and benefit from, an appropriate market for their work. Knowledge gained through the mapping exercise has questioned this assumption and suggests that the relationship between maker, professional development provider and professional development provision needs to be reconsidered to achieve a more proactive engagement with the creation of markets and generation of professional opportunities.

5.5.4 As matters currently stand, makers seem to be being offered a variety of professional development experiences that are predicated on provision of a skills and knowledge model of professional development (regardless of whether or not this is what makers, themselves, want). This professional development formula has been created largely independently of any consideration for the support and development of markets, or of development of any professional or creative opportunities and activities for makers.

5.5.5 The hypothesis emerging from these findings was that makers' primary motivation must be understood to be 'making', and that what makers want from professional development, above all else, is to enhance their capacity to develop new markets, especially new selling and exhibiting opportunities. This proposition was supported by the 2002 *South West Arts Crafts Review* survey findings, in which 60% of makers felt that personal judgement of quality of work was an important measure of success, and 80% were seeking to develop and sell or exhibit a new body of work.

5.5.6 It would appear that, on the whole, current thinking is not making this crucial connection between makers' primary motivation for their practices, the fundamental requirement for them to find a market outlet for their practices if they are to be successful, and the nature of professional development provision. Skills training and signposting of information are of limited value unless they are provided within the context of a wider framework of support – one that acknowledges that the survival and success of makers ultimately depends upon increasing the overall level of professional activity and business opportunities that are available to them. Without markets, makers and the craft sector don't exist.

5.5.7 The above has provided the motivation for subsequent research and prompted the devising and implementation of a wide-ranging survey of makers in the West Midlands, that could both yield tangible data to describe makers' situation in the region, and establish their own perceptions of their professional development needs.

5.6 Key points emerging from the mapping exercise that informed conception and development of the *Makers in focus* survey

a) After ten years of growing acceptance, professional development provision has become broader in definition, more varied in content and increasingly available.

b) The diversity of the existing profile of national provision, as identified in section 5.4.10, appears to be appropriate given the diversity of the UK craft sector.

c) There are professional development models of good practice in England that would offer appropriate support for makers in the West Midlands. (See Appendix 3 for notable professional development schemes)

d) Emerging and established makers are receiving some accessible, tailored and flexible provision; however, less useful, generic professional development provision is still being delivered.

e) Professional development providers tend to supply what they think makers need, but serious questions remain about whether what they provide is appropriate and in line with makers' wants.

f) More research is required to ascertain West Midlands makers' wants, so that their practices can be effectively supported to achieve real medium and long-term growth and improvement within the sector.

g) Partnerships and collaborations between professional development providers and arts organisations and agencies are essential to the survival and profiling of professional development initiatives.

h) Higher educational institutions have not yet fulfilled their potential to play a significant role in the development of professional development provision and in the West Midlands' retention of emerging makers.

i) Poor promotion and communication of professional development initiatives to makers needs to be addressed.

j) The predominance of relatively short-term public sector investment remains a crucial inhibitor to professional development progression and development.

k) For professional development to grow in effectiveness, more imaginative, robust connections must be forged between makers, professional development provision and providers, and the markets and professional and business opportunities that are available to makers.

l) There appears to be a gap between relatively widespread provision available to the maker in support of skills and knowledge development, and nationally patchy, regionally sparse provision in support of accessing markets and professional and business opportunities.

m) Successful professional development schemes play a direct role in raising the profile of makers, and of the region as a worthwhile place for makers to base themselves and their businesses.

6 *Makers in focus*: project aims and methods

6.1 The aims of *Makers in focus*

6.1.1 The aim of the research survey, *Makers in focus* was to gain a greater knowledge and understanding of makers, their professional activities and their working environment in the West Midlands region. The survey set out to ascertain makers' views of their own needs and what they saw as being the most effective ways to support their creativity, professionalism, success and sectoral growth. The research was intended to facilitate future, effective initiatives to support makers and, ultimately, formulation of a region-wide strategy for development and implementation of professional development activity.

6.2 Methods of investigation

6.2.1 The first stage of the survey comprised quantitative research. In September 2003, questionnaires were sent to a sample of 565 makers constituting two, distinct groups: newly qualified art and design graduates from higher educational institutions in the region ('emerging graduates'), and makers from selected crafts databases and lists in the West Midlands ('listed makers'). (Section 6.3.1 and 6.4.1). Two separate questionnaires (see Appendix 9) were designed to target the two groups, although some key questions were common to both. (Prior to the survey, the 'listed makers' questionnaire was piloted to ten makers to test its validity and compatibility. Some minor alterations were made but comments and feedback at this stage were positive.)

6.2.2 It was believed to be important for the survey to address the professional situation of a broad spectrum of makers, and the decision to choose two distinct groups was in response to findings of South West Arts' *Crafts Review* (Steer, 2002), which had established that only a small percentage of makers practising for two years or less featured on regional databases:

> *'Newly established makers are less likely to belong to guilds, who require some sort of track record for membership. In addition, it indicates that South West Arts are less likely to have contact with newly established makers.'*
> (Steer, 2002)

6.2.3 A second, qualitative stage of research, in March 2004, was achieved through an invitation to a small number of emerging graduates and listed makers to take part in a discussion forum. The forum provided a focus for interrogating emerging findings and for teasing out further questions prompted by the quantitative data that had been captured. Reference to this forum, as it has contributed to findings and the interpretation of data, is made throughout.

6.3 Listed makers (makers registered on crafts databases and lists)

6.3.1 A questionnaire was sent to 404 West Midlands makers registered on listings and databases available through the following organisations and initiatives:

- Crafts Council Register of Makers (West Midlands region)
- Arts Council England, West Midlands

- Worcestershire Guild of Designer Craftsmen
- Crafts:works (Shropshire)
- Hereford Contemporary Craft Fair catalogue

6.3.2 This report identifies ‘listed makers’ rather than deploying the pervasive term, ‘mid-career makers’. Being ‘listed’ is taken as an indicator that makers are actively practising and marketing their work. Such makers constitute a broad profile of practitioners, not just those who are at a midpoint in their careers.

6.4 Emerging graduates

6.4.1 A questionnaire was sent to 161 emerging graduates from five of the region’s higher educational institutions (Birmingham Institute of Art & Design (UCE); Coventry University; Herefordshire College of Art and Design; Staffordshire University; University of Wolverhampton). All of the participating graduates had exhibited at the 2003 *New Designers* exhibition in London (the national showcase for emerging makers).

6.5 Response rate

6.5.1 Of the 404 questionnaires sent out to listed makers in a single mailing, 179 were returned in October 2003. This represented a 44% response rate. Of the 161 questionnaires sent out to emerging graduates in a single mailing, 59 were returned in October 2003. This represented a 37% response rate.

6.5.2 In total, 565 questionnaires were sent out, with a total of 238 returned. The total response rate for the whole survey was therefore 42%.

7 *Makers in focus*: survey results for listed makers

7.1 The characteristics of listed makers in the region

The profile of a typical West Midlands maker is female, aged 41-50, and practising in a rural location in textiles or ceramics in a studio at home.

7.1.1 As seen in Table 1, over a quarter of respondents worked in ceramics (27%), and a little less than a quarter in textiles (23%). The third most popular activities were jewellery and woodwork (both 9%). These percentages closely resemble the findings of South West Arts' *Craft Review*, which also identified a predominance of makers working in ceramics and textiles (30% and 24% respectively).The Crafts Council's report, *Making It in the 21st Century* (McAuley and Fillis, 2004), however, cites textiles as being more predominant than ceramics (23% and 21% respectively).

Table 1
Craft disciplines

Craft disciplines	*Number*	*Percentage*
Ceramics	49	27%
Textiles	41	23%
Jewellery	17	9%
Woodwork	17	9%
Furniture	15	8%
Metalwork	9	5%
Other	9	5%
Glass	6	3%
Musical instruments	4	2%
Silversmith	3	2%
Basketry	2	1%
Leatherwork	2	1%
Blacksmith	1	0.5%
Bookbinding	1	0.5%
Calligraphy	1	0.5%
Paperwork	1	0.5%
Toys	1	0.5%
	179	

N.B. In all tables that follow, the base figure (in bold) constitutes the total number of makers responding to the question being analysed. Some of those surveyed may have chosen not to answer certain questions; some questions may have required individuals to provide more than one answer. The total of percentages quoted in any one table may add to more than 100% due to rounding up or down.

7.1.2 In *Makers in focus*, a high percentage of respondents was female (61%). Listed makers predominantly worked at home and were aged between 41 and 50; the mean age of the respondents was 46.

Table 2
Gender

Gender	*Number*	*Percentage*
Female	108	61%
Male	70	39%
	178	

Table 3
Studio/workshop location

Studio/workshop location	*Number*	*Percentage*
Home environment	134	75%
Separate premises	45	25%
	179	

Table 4
Reasons for a studio at home

Reason	*Number*	*Percentage*
Financial	62	47%
Space in the home	41	31%
Flexible hours	17	13%
No travelling	6	5%
Childcare	3	2%
Convenience	3	2%
	132	

Table 5
Age groups

Age group	*Number*	*Percentage*
20-30	27	15%
31-40	31	17%
41-50	47	26%
51-60	43	24%
61- above	30	17%
	178	

7.1.3 Nearly half of the respondents (45%) actively chose to work in the West Midlands (Table 6). The most frequent reasons given for their choice were 'environment' (52%), 'family' (51%) and 'personal' (37%). 64% identified that they practised in a rural environment (Table 8). The most popular locations for makers were Herefordshire (22%), Shropshire (17%) and Warwickshire (16%). The least popular locations were Sandwell (1%), Coventry (1%), Wolverhampton (2%), Dudley (2%), Solihull (2%), Walsall (2%), Telford and Wrekin (2%) - all urban and suburban conurbations (Table 9). This is in contrast to the Crafts Council's *Making It in the 21st Century* survey findings:

'Contrary to expectation, the research identifies that crafts are not primarily a rural occupation.'
(McAuley and Fillis, 2004)

Table 6
Have you chosen specifically to work in the West Midlands?

West Midlands specifically	*Number*	*Percentage*
No	98	55%
Yes	81	45%
	179	

Table 7
Reasons for choosing to work in the West Midlands

Reason	*Number*	*Percentage*
Environment	42	52%
Family	41	51%
Personal	30	37%
Financial	22	27%
Graduated	21	26%
Good opportunities	14	17%
Good support	12	15%
Creative	10	12%
	81	

Table 8
Is your studio based in a rural or urban location?

Location	*Number*	*Percentage*
Rural	113	64%
Urban	64	36%
	177	

Table 9
Location of practice

Location	*Number*	*Percentage*
Herefordshire	39	22%
Shropshire	31	17%
Warwickshire	28	16%
Worcestershire	22	12%
Birmingham	21	12%
Staffordshire	10	6%
Stoke-on-Trent	7	4%
Dudley	4	2%
Telford & Wrekin	4	2%
Solihull	3	2%
Walsall	3	2%
Wolverhampton	3	2%
Coventry	2	1%
Sandwell	1	1%
	178	

7.2 Education

41-50 year olds present the greatest variety of educational paths; 20-31 year olds are most likely to have undertaken a degree.

7.2.1 66% of respondents overall had taken a first degree in art and design; 20-31 year olds were the group most likely to have undertaken a BA (Hons) degree. 41-50 year olds were more likely than other age groups to have progressed by means of the following, educational choices: working with an experienced maker; non-degree course in art and design; formal government scheme. 51-60 years olds were more likely than other age groups to have been self taught or have no formal training.

7.2.2 36% of 41-50 year olds and 42% of 31-40 year olds not had participated in professional development in the last three years, which may suggest that their professional development needs are not being catered for in the region. Those least likely to be involved with professional development activities such as: professional business skills; networking events; mentor/mentee; access to equipment and facilities were the 61+ age group, possibly because the majority of them were retired or reaching retirement.

Table 10
Craft related education

Craft related education	*Number*	*Percentage*
Degree course in art or design	119	66%
Art/design foundation	86	48%
Working with experienced maker	36	20%
Non degree course in art or design	34	19%
Self taught/no formal training	34	19%
Postgraduate course in art or design	28	16%
Formal apprentice/government scheme	9	5%
	179	

Over a third of respondents had chosen to practice in the West Midlands after studying for a degree outside the region.

7.2.3 Of the 119 respondents with BA (Hons) degrees in art and design subjects, 67 had graduated from higher educational institutions outside the West Midlands, and 47 had graduated from a higher education institution in the region. Of the 67 who had graduated from higher educational institutions outside the West Midlands, nearly half (32) had elected to work in the region either for family, personal, financial or environmental reasons, or for the creative and professional opportunities that were perceived to be available.

Table 11
Where did you graduate from?

Higher education institution	*Number*	*Percentage*
College/university elsewhere	67	59%
University of Wolverhampton	14	12%
Birmingham Institute of Art & Design	13	11%
Staffordshire University	9	8%
Herefordshire College of Art & Design	5	4%
Coventry University	3	3%
Shrewsbury College of Art & Technology	3	3%
	114	

The majority of graduates study for their second degree inside the region.

7.2.4 Of the 19 respondents (11%) who had studied for an MA, 14 had done so at a West Midlands higher education institution: 5 had studied at the University of Wolverhampton, 8 at UCE and 1 at Staffordshire University. They encompassed 7 different craft practices, with ceramics and textiles practitioners being slightly better represented than practitioners of other craftforms.

Table 12
Where did you study for your MA?

Higher education institution	*Number*	*Percentage*
Birmingham Institute of Art & Design	8	42%
University of Wolverhampton	5	26%
College/university outside the West Midlands	5	26%
Staffordshire University	1	5%
Coventry University	0	0%
	19	

7.3 Length of practice

Makers have a high survival rate; the average length of practice is 15 years.

7.3.1 61% of the respondents had been established for more than 10 years. 78% had been practising for over 5 years. This suggests that makers have a high survival rate and a strong commitment to their practices. Respondents' mean average length of practice is 15 years.

Table 13
Number of years as a practising maker

Years	*Number*	*Percentages*
20-over	63	35%
11-19	47	26%
3-5	30	17%
6-10	30	17%
0-2	9	5%
	179	

7.4 Participation in professional development activities

41% of makers have not participated in professional development activities in the last 3 years.

Makers participate less in mentoring schemes and critical debate than in business skills courses.

7.4.1 Table 14 shows 41% of respondents having undertaken no professional development in the last three years. Of those respondents participating in professional development, 27% had attended professional business skills courses and 24% had gone to networking events. Unpopular types of professional development were mentor/mentee schemes (8%) and critical debate forums (5%). The latter may suggest either that these schemes are scarce in the region or that makers perceive such opportunities to be of little benefit.

7.4.2 Participation in the national, higher education institution based Crafts Council scheme, *Next Move* and in the Birmingham-based initiative, *Design Space 2000* was low amongst respondents. This is partly explained by the fact that both schemes are specifically for emerging makers (an underrepresented group in this survey), and that they are highly selective.

Table 14
Types of professional development undertaken in the last 3 years

Professional development	*Number*	*Percentage*
I haven't undertaken any professional development	73	41%
Training in professional/business skills	48	27%
Organised networking events/forums	43	24%
One to one advice	23	13%
Access to equipment/facilities	18	10%
Mentor/mentee scheme	14	8%
Organised critical debate forums	9	5%
AA2A scheme	6	3%
Design Space 2000	3	2%
Next Move scheme	2	1%
	179	

7.5 Length of practice and professional development involvement

Makers with 6-10 years of practice are least likely to participate in professional development.

Makers with 0-5 years of practice are most likely to participate in professional development.

7.5.1 On comparing professional development participation with length of practice, it emerges that the group least likely to have participated is those with 6-10 years of practice. 50% of this group had not undertaken professional development in the last three years. These respondents were closely followed by those practising for 20+ years, 48% of whom had not taken up any professional development opportunities.

7.5.2 Groups most likely to have undertaken professional development were those with 0-2 years and 3-5 years of practice. 55% of the former had attended professional business skills courses and 37% of the latter had attended network forums. In relation to most types of activity, respondents with 6 years of practice and above were least likely to have engaged in professional development activities. This suggests either that appropriate professional development is not available, or that these makers perceive professional development to be of little value to them.

7.6 Rural and urban

Rural makers are less likely to be involved in professional development provision than their urban counterparts.

7.6.1 It is not just urban makers who participate in professional development. Although professional development provision was clearly accessible to rural makers, it is not clear from the research whether professional development is being provided locally, or whether makers are travelling to urban locations to participate.

7.6.2 While concerns that rural makers cannot access professional development appear, therefore, to be largely unfounded, the percentage of professional development participants amongst rural respondents (56%) was marginally lower than the percentage of professional development participants amongst urban respondents (64%). Nonetheless, rural makers had received more one-to-one advice than urban makers, and more had taken advantage of the national AA2A scheme (which enables selected artists, designers and makers to access the facilities of art schools and universities) than those in urban areas.

7.6.3 The percentage of rural makers who were involved in network forums, professional business training, schemes providing access to equipment or facilities, critical debate, mentor/mentee schemes, *Next Move* and *Design Space 2000* is lower than the percentage of urban makers.

7.6.4 Although the percentage difference between the two groups (rural and urban) is relatively small, the overall number of rurally based respondents taking part in the *Makers in focus* survey was greater than the number of urban based respondents. In real terms, therefore, the gap in take-up of professional development may be larger than the survey indicates and further research may be needed to clarify the findings of the report in this respect.

7.6.5 In the discussion forum rural makers cited isolation, especially, as a hindrance to developing a career or business. Membership of an artists' group was identified as having real benefits, including: interaction with other artists, sharing costs and equipment, getting out of the studio and interacting with practitioners from different craft mediums.

7.7 Listed makers in the region practising for two years and less

A gap exists in the profile of the region's practitioners: only 5% of respondents were emerging makers.

7.7.1 It is a fact that the majority of new businesses fail within two years of being set up. However, this does not explain the apparently extremely low percentage (5%) of 'emerging makers' (Table 13) currently based in the region (ie those practising for between 0 and 2 years). Widely accepted research has shown that makers take longer to secure their careers and businesses than do other small and medium enterprise sectors: they tend to juggle self-employment with voluntary work and part–time employment over many years, and this profile means that it takes longer for their businesses to be tested and become established. Given its import to the future health and growth of the designer maker sector in the region, the apparently peculiarly low percentage of emerging makers within the West Midlands prompted particular attention being paid to its needs and situation within the research.

Visible emerging makers are very active.

7.7.2 The number of respondents to the survey practising for 0-2 years was nine (Table 13). These nine 'emerging makers' appear to be very proactive and entrepreneurial: they sell and exhibit their work and had already made eight successful funding applications. Eight of the nine makers in the group were female; seven worked from home; seven had other incomes and were involved with running workshops, teaching, arts administration, lecturing, and in working in the non art and craft world. One was drawing a pension. A third of them had undertaken residencies and entered competitions. Eight were between 20-30 years old, with one in the 51-60 age group. Proportional to the size of their group, they had engaged more in professional development than had any other ‘length of practice’ category in the survey.

7.7.3 Of the nine makers practising for two years and under, four had graduated from universities outside the region and four from universities inside the region (one did not disclose educational information).

7.7.4 At worst, the above could suggest that, within a two-year period, only four West Midlands makers had started up craft businesses or careers, despite some 200 craft graduates emerging annually from the region’s higher educational institutions. Assuming that this is very unlikely to be the case, however, the figures more properly raise the question of why emerging makers basing themselves in the region remain invisible within accepted professional contexts (ie why they are not captured by the range of professional databases upon which this survey drew to elicit maker responses).

Emerging makers practising for two years or less are invisible.

7.7.5 If many more emerging makers do exist in the West Midlands, as is almost certainly the case, they seem not to be registering on the Crafts Council’s or regional databases. This renders them effectively invisible to arts and professional development organisations: they cannot be contacted by providers; they do not receive information or newsletters; and they cannot be part of agency-organised craft sector networking. This must be of serious concern to the region, to its higher educational institutions and to the various governmental and funding and commercial or regeneration agencies with an interest in growth of the cultural industries sector and the arts.

7.8 Types of businesses

The majority of makers are sole traders with no employees.

7.8.1 A high percentage of respondents to the survey were sole traders (78%) with no employees (86%), defined by the business sector as micro businesses.

Table 15
Legal form of business

Legal form of business	*Number*	*Percentage*
Sole trader	140	78%
Partnership	15	8%
Hobby	13	7%
Unsure	8	4%
Limited company	3	2%
Cooperative	0	0%
	179	

Table 16
Who do you employ?

Employees	*Number*	*Percentage*
0	153	86%
1	15	8%
2-4	8	4%
5-7	1	1%
8-12	0	
13-above	0	
	177	

Makers are committed and dedicated to their practices and businesses.

7.8.2 25% of respondents worked 41-50 hours a week and 15% over 50 hours. This is indicative of makers’ commitment and dedication to their creative practices and businesses. The mean average weekly working time for full-time respondents was 44 hours and for part-time respondents, 17 hours.

Table 17
Average hours worked per week

Hours	*Number*	*Percentage*
41-50	44	25%
11-20	38	21%
51-over	26	15%
21-30	25	14%
31-40	25	14%
0-10	20	11%
	178	

Portfolio careers are an accepted lifestyle.

7.8.3 Both full-time makers and part-time makers were involved in other income generating activities as an aspect of making their livings, re-enforcing the view that portfolio working is a commonly accepted lifestyle and, possibly, a necessity. 37% of full-time makers were involved in other activities, compared with 90% of part-time makers. (Research by Ball and Price, 1999 suggests that portfolio working beyond the main business of making, exhibiting and selling is a growing aspect of makers’ lives.)

Table 18
Are you full time or part time?

Full-time or Part-time	*Number*	*Percentage*
Full-time	96	54%
Part-time	81	46%
	177	

Table 19
Is your craft practice your only source of income?

Sole income	*Number*	*Percentage*
No	111	62%
Yes	68	38%
	179	

7.9 Other income and involvement in other art or craft related opportunities

Makers are multi skilled and resourceful.

7.9.1 It has been established by previous research that makers survive by juggling multi, portfolio careers (Ball and Price 1999). Of those respondents to the *Makers in focus* survey, 62% (Table 19) had other sources of income. This suggests not only that income from their creative practice is inadequate to support them, but also that makers are proactive, resourceful and multi-skilled.

7.9.2 The most prevalent sources of additional income were teaching (27%), running workshops (19%) and working in non art and craft related jobs (17%). The fourth most prevalent was a pension, with 15% of respondents drawing a pension. This is not surprising considering that 17% of respondents were over the age of 60.

Table 20
If you have another income, what other sources of income do you have?

Source of income	*Number*	*Percentage*
Teaching	49	27%
Running workshops	35	19%
Non art & design work	30	17%
Pension	27	15%
Community art	23	13%
Freelance consultant	10	5%
Arts administration	9	5%
Lecturing	9	5%
	179	

Portfolio working is integral to makers' practices.

Fundraising is identified by makers as an infrequent activity.

7.9.3 Respondents were asked about other related art and craft opportunities in which they were involved. A number of listed makers who had previously claimed that their practice was their only source of income also identified that they were involved in the opportunities listed in Table 21. This apparent paradox suggests that these makers consider all of the income generating activities identified in Table 21 as integral aspects of their creative practice, not as supplementary, or different kinds of activity.

7.9.4 Listed makers were the least likely to be overtly involved in fundraising to sustain their practices, with only 7% claiming to do so. However, elsewhere in the survey (Table 28) 60% of them claimed to have made applications for funding. This suggests that they do not see fundraising as a valued regular activity but, rather, as an occasional, infrequent occurrence.

Table 21
What other art and craft related opportunities are you involved in?

Opportunities	*Number*	*Percentage*
I'm not involved in any	71	40%
Organising your own exhibitions	52	29%
Competitions	22	12%
Residencies	21	12%
Community art	17	9%
Art/design consultancy	16	9%
Public art	14	8%
Funding	12	7%
Working with industry	12	7%
	179	

7.10 Selling and exhibiting profile

Makers have an active selling and exhibiting profile.

Makers are focused on selling and exhibiting their work.

7.10.1 Nearly all respondents (97%) to the survey are proactive and interested in selling their creative work; slightly fewer (84%) exhibit their work. Makers in some of the crafts, such as furniture, glass, jewellery and metalwork, do not exhibit their work so extensively, with more concentrating largely upon sales. This profile is most prevalent in ceramics, with 20% of ceramicists exclusively selling work.

Table 22
Sell and/or exhibit work

Sell/exhibit work	*Number*	*Percentage*
Sell	173	97%
Exhibit	150	84%
	179	

56% of makers mainly sell or exhibit in the UK.

7.10.2 Over half (56%) of the respondents sell and exhibit nationally, finding their main markets outside the region (Table 23). They are proactive and resourceful in finding opportunities for sales and new markets in the UK. One maker at the discussion forum noted that, although he took advantage of national opportunities, organisations and group websites to market his work, he found it difficult to find an appropriate selling opportunity for his craftform (he did not sell through the tourist market locally).

7.10.3 Only 3% of respondents identified international markets as their main markets. This finding suggests that there is considerable scope to support, develop and enhance makers' understanding and exploitation of international markets through access to appropriate professional development provision.

41% of makers find their main selling and exhibiting markets in the region.

7.10.4 41% of respondents are able to situate their main activities and markets in the West Midlands (Table 23). This is surprising given concerns expressed by makers at the discussion forum about the lack of outlets for their work in the region. One maker at the forum used local and regional markets provided by galleries and craft fairs to market her work. She nonetheless also commented on the paucity of local and regional galleries and how hard it was for them to survive.

Table 23
Where do you mainly sell or/and exhibit?

Mainly sell or/and exhibit	*Number*	*Percentage*
Nationally	100	56%
West Midlands region	72	41%
Internationally	5	3%
	177	

Makers are not reliant on the tourist market to their sell work.

Customers in the West Midlands are local people.

7.10.5 49% of respondents to *Makers in focus* identified the profile of their customers or audiences to be local people (Table 24), with rural makers more dependent on local markets than their urban counterparts. This percentage is less than in some other areas of the country: Steer's 2002 *South West Arts Crafts Review*, for example, identifies 73% of makers in the South West as selling primarily to local people.

7.10.6 Results challenge the perception that craft in the West Midlands, especially rural craft, is dependent on the tourist market to survive. The following comparisons between two, contrasting regions are made to illustrate the relative role that tourism plays in the West Midlands:

- In the West Midlands:
  1% of respondents claimed that international visitors were their main market
  24% of respondents claimed that UK visitors were their main market

- In the South West (Steer, 2002):
  32% of respondents sold to international visitors
  62% of respondents sold to UK visitors

7.10.7 In the West Midlands, 25% of *Makers in focus* respondents do not know their customer or audience profile (Table 24). This suggests that some professional development support is necessary to improve makers' market knowledge and skills and thereby to support their capacity for increased sales and exhibiting opportunities.

Table 24
Profile of your main customers/audiences in the West Midlands

Customer/audience	*Number*	*Percentage*
Local people	83	49%
I don't know	42	25%
UK visitors to the region	41	24%
International visitors to the region	2	1%
	168	

7.11 Selling and exhibiting regionally, national and internationally

7.11.1 Respondents were asked to choose their three most-used venues for selling and exhibiting in each of the three categories, West Midlands, UK and International.

7.11.2 The majority of makers mainly sell or exhibit their work in the West Midlands through selling exhibitions in galleries; shops; craft fairs; private commissions; and from their own premises (Table 25).

Table 25
Where do you sell/exhibit your work in the West Midlands?

Venue	*Number*	*Percentage*
Galleries (primarily selling exhibitions)	84	47%
Shops (including gallery & museum shops)	67	37%
Craft fairs (selling direct to the public)	64	36%
Private commissions	56	31%
From own premises	45	25%
Exhibitions (non gallery venues)	29	16%
Commissions (organisations/companies/agencies)	26	14%
Galleries (primarily non selling exhibitions)	18	10%
Organised open studio events	17	9%
Festivals	13	7%
Trade fairs (selling to galleries/shops/businesses)	11	6%
Website	9	5%
I don’t	6	3%
Magazines	2	1%
	179	

7.11.3 Table 25 shows that the majority of makers choose the same types of selling venues within the region as they do more widely within the UK (Table 26). 14% of makers, however (operating within the craft areas of ceramics, textiles, woodwork, furniture and 'other', unspecified craftforms) do not identify themselves as selling in the UK. These makers can reasonably be inferred either to be totally reliant on regional sales or, in addition, possibly to be exporting.

Websites are not the main outlets for selling and exhibiting work.

7.11.4 There is a widespread perception that substantial and growing numbers of makers are using websites and that these are providing a new and successful way to sell work. However, the findings of *Makers in focus* are that websites are not a popular mechanism for selling or exhibiting work; indeed, they are one of the least popular of the listed venue types.

Makers may not be set up for the increase in production that would result from trade fair success.

7.11.5 Utilisation of trade fairs as a means of selling work is also low; makers who did identify trade fairs as a main venue were jewellers, leatherworkers and textile designers. This result is ostensibly surprising given that one of the major international trade fair venues is located in the West Midlands region, but stand costs are high and prohibitive. Other trade fairs specialising in craft and designer products are located in London, which adds to the costs of undertaking such a marketing venture. Another possible reason for such low uptake could be that makers are not set up for the increase in production and the greater market demand that would result from trade fair success: their work may be 'one off' in nature and unsuitable for batch production.

Table 26
Where do you sell/exhibit your work in the UK?

Venue	*Number*	*Percentage*
Galleries (primarily selling exhibitions)	80	45%
Shops (including gallery & museum shops)	66	37%
Craft fairs (selling direct to the public)	64	36%
Private commissions	58	32%
I don't	25	14%
Exhibitions (non gallery venues)	25	14%
Galleries (primarily non selling exhibitions)	22	12%
Trade fairs (selling to galleries/shops/businesses)	19	11%
Commissions (organisations/companies/agencies)	18	10%
Festivals	14	8%
Website	12	7%
Magazines	3	2%
	179	

45% of makers export overseas.

7.11.6 Table 27 suggests that 45% of respondents had sold or exhibited internationally. This indicates that West Midlands makers are already proactive in accessing international markets. Elsewhere in the survey, however, they identify developing new opportunities internationally as one of the three most necessary areas of support if they are to further the success and growth of their practices (Table 33).

Over 50% of jewellers and textile designers are most likely to enter international markets.

7.11.7 Active exporters are jewellers (53%); textile designers (51%); ceramicists (39%); woodworkers (35%); furniture designers (33%). The number of respondents from other craftforms was low and therefore a meaningful figure for exporting was not possible.

Table 27
Where do you sell/exhibit your work internationally?

Venue	*Number*	*Percentage*
I don't	98	55%
Shops (including gallery & museum shops)	26	14%
Private commissions	25	14%
Galleries (primarily selling exhibitions)	23	13%
Galleries (primarily non selling exhibitions)	13	7%
Trade fairs (selling to galleries/shops/businesses)	11	6%
Exhibitions (non gallery venues)	10	5%
Craft fairs (selling direct to the public)	9	5%
Commissions (organisations/companies/agencies)	8	4%
Website	7	4%
Festivals	4	2%
Magazines	2	1%
	179	

7.12 Limited use of markets

Makers depend on a limited market, regionally, nationally and internationally.

7.12.1 Some respondents to *Makers in focus* found it difficult to identify three markets in each of the locational categories (regional, UK and international). 33% of respondents could not identify three markets at regional level, 45% at UK level, and 88% at international level. 75% of respondents identified only one market at international level.

7.12.2 These results suggest that many makers in the region make very limited use of markets, either because the nature of their work does not give them access to wider markets, or because they do not wish to expand into new markets, or because they do not know how to do so. This makes for interesting comparison with findings of the *Making it in the 21st Century* report, which identified a similar problem of market limitation:

'Finding outlets for work was a problem for 26%, and 23% found that their customer base was not growing.'
(McAuley and Fillis, 2004)

7.12.3 Given that most makers appear to make highly limited use of the craft market, it is hard to believe that those selling solely in the region can survive unless they are earning a large part of their income from other activities.

7.13 Public investment in makers' development

60% of makers have attempted to access public investment to support development of their practices.

84% of makers' applications for Arts Council England, West Midlands investment have been successful.

7.13.1 Makers' attitudes and responses towards gaining public financial investment in their work give cause for optimism: Table 28 shows that 60% of *Makers in focus* respondents had applied for some form of funding in support of development of their creative practice, with the highest number of applications (61 or 57%) being addressed to Arts Council England, West Midlands (Table 29). 84% of these applications were successful and had resulted in a grant. The Crafts Council was the recipient of 30 (28%) applications, 53% of which had been successful. Twenty respondents had made applications to both trusts or foundations and Business Link, with an equal success rate. The least exploited funding source of those itemised was the British Council, to which one successful application had been made.

Table 28
Have you applied for or received funding?

Applied/received funding	*Number*	*Percentage*
Yes	106	60%
No	72	40%
	178	

Table 29
From what sources did you either apply for or receive funding?

Funding source	*Applied Number*	*Applied Percentage*	*Received Number*	*Received Percentage*
Arts Council England, West Midlands	61	57%	51	48%
Crafts Council	30	28%	16	15%
Trusts/foundations	20	19%	14	13%
Business Link	20	19%	14	13%
Local authorities	16	15%	14	13%
Princes Trust	15	14%	12	11%
Trade Partners UK (DTI)	13	12%	11	10%
Advantage West Midlands	8	7%	6	6%
Another arts council	5	9%	4	4%
Government agencies	4	4%	4	4%
British Council	1	1%	1	1%
	106		**106**	

7.14 Sourcing information

Publications are more popular than the internet for researching information relevant to practice.

7.14.1 To find information relevant to their activities, makers utilised the following main sources (Table 30): publications (51%), other makers (45%), Crafts Council (28%), the internet (28%).

7.14.2 Surprisingly, for listed makers, publications were still the most popular way of researching information despite perceived increasing use of the internet. Makers' reliance upon 'other makers' as a source of information supports the need for greater support for networking and exchange through organised networking events.

7.14.3 Feedback from the discussion forum further emphasised the value of networking. Those taking part felt that support achieved through networking had helped their careers. This had occurred both informally, meeting up with friends, and more formally, through taking part in conferences, for example. One maker had gained information about an international residency informally through a friend whilst backpacking, and had found two funding sources through a fellow practitioner.

7.14.4 Forum participants also felt that societies, guilds and associations, and newsletters all provided important structures through which to source information. One maker stated:

'Get on as many databases as possible.'
(*Makers in focus* discussion forum, 2004)

7.14.5 The least used sources of information were other regional higher education and further education, Arts Council England offices, Arts Council England, London and Arts Centres.

Table 30
Where do you mainly source information?

Source of information	*Number*	*Percentage*
Craft/art publications	92	51%
Other makers	81	45%
Crafts Council	50	28%
Internet	50	28%
Arts Council England, West Midlands	48	27%
Galleries	32	18%
Library	12	7%
Business Link/Agency	10	5%
Art Centres	8	4%
ACE	7	4%
Another regional Arts Council	6	3%
College or university	2	1%
I don’t source information	0	0%
	179	

7.15 Annual turnover

Based on individual, mean average turnover, the combined turnover for the crafts sector in the West Midlands is £32 million.

7.15.1 Only 3% of respondents to *Makers in focus* left the question of annual turnover unanswered (Table 31). Reported annual turnover is as follows

- 23% - under £2,500 (85% in this category are practising part-time)
- 22% - £5000- £10,000 (54% are part-time)
- 16% - £2,500 - £5000 (64% are part-time)
- 10% - £35,000+ (all in this category are practising full-time)
- 7% - £10,000 - £15,000 (all are full-time)
- 7% - £20,000 - £25,000 (17% in this category are part-time)
- 5% - £15,000 - £20,000 (22% are part-time)
- 5% - £30,000 - £35,000 (all are full-time)
- 4% - £25,000 - £30,000 (all are full-time)

7.15.2 Respondents with a turnover within the ranges of £10,000-£15,000 and £25,000 and above were all full-time. The majority of makers with the lowest turnover of £2,500 and under identified themselves as part-time. The mean average turnover of those participating in this question was £12,593 (ie calculated using the midpoint of each range and assuming the average turnover of those selecting over £35,000 to be £40,000).

7.15.3 Using the West Midlands craft population figure of 2,560 from *Making It in the 21st Century*, and deploying this mean average, suggests a combined turnover for all makers in the region in the order of £32 million plus. This represents 4% of the £826 million turnover estimated to be achieved by makers in England and Wales for 2003. (McAuley and Fillis, 2004)

The estimated mean annual turnover for makers in the West Midlands is £15,000 lower than the average figure for makers in England and Wales.

7.15.4 Tentative comparisons between West Midlands makers' turnover and *Making it in the 21st Century* turnover estimates for makers across England and Wales suggest a significant disparity between the earnings of the region's makers and those based elsewhere. The *mean average* turnover for a full-time, West Midlands craftsperson is £19,569, and for a part-time practitioner, £5,384. McAuley and Fillis (2004) identify the *average* turnover for a full-time craftsperson as being £35,028 and for a part-time craftsperson, £7,891.

7.15.5 At the time of writing, the complete *Making It in the 21st Century* report has yet to be published, and details of turnover ranges are not specified in the available executive summary. It appears likely, however, that West Midlands makers are turning over considerably less than the national average, and this would be consistent with findings in the South West, where makers are similarly placed:

'[…] *it does appear that full time makers in the south west could be turning over significantly less than the national average. Of course this may be a function of the original database created by the Crafts Council.'*

(Steer, 2002)

7.15.6 A possible reason for the apparent disparity between earnings levels is that the Crafts Council's *Making It in the 21st Century* survey sampled a disproportionate number of makers in London and the southern east region (37%), which are home to higher numbers of well established and higher profile makers.

The average annual turnover for a full-time female maker is over £9,000 less than her male counterpart.

7.15.7 For full-time male makers, the mean average turnover is £23,900 and for part-time male makers, £4,013. For full-time female makers the average turnover is £14,534 and for part-time female makers, £4,618.

Table 31
Current annual turnover

Annual turnover	*Number*	*Percentage*
£0-2,500	41	23%
£5,000-10,000	39	22%
£2,500-5,000	28	16%
£35,000-above	17	10%
£10,000-£15,000	12	7%
£20,000-25,000	12	7%
£15,000-20,000	9	5%
£30,000-35,000	9	5%
£25,000-30,000	7	4%
	174	

7.16 Investment of additional funding

Listed makers want to generate public investment in the development of their creative work and the revival of their businesses.

7.16.1 If additional funding were available, listed makers identified that they would wish to invest in the development of their creative work and the revival of their businesses.

7.16.2 Table 32 illustrates that, if additional investment were available in support of their practices, listed makers who participated in the survey would want to target this towards

- the research and development of creative work (52%)
- the purchase of new equipment (45%)
- the research and development of market opportunities (43%)
- the research and development of promotional materials (31%)

7.16.3 The above suggests that respondents want time to make new work and explore new ideas. They want the use of new equipment to make it; they want to develop new promotional tools and, finally, to place their work in new markets for the purposes of selling or exhibiting. The *Making It in the 21st Century* survey had similar results:

'Mid-career development and funding was seen to be important by 84%. This reflects the recognition of a cyclical need to reskill and revitalise business models as conditions change or new technology or new markets develop.'
(McAuley and Fillis, 2004)

7.16.4 At the *Makers in focus* discussion forum in March 2004, makers felt that time was an issue: they stated that there was not enough time to undertake marketing and develop creative work. A lot of makers' time is taken up with non-making activities in order to earn a living. One listed maker at the discussion forum felt that he needed concentrated time in order to be creative and to gain new skills, and a residency had given him this opportunity. One listed maker remarked:

'I feel the need to develop new markets, for example London where there is more disposable income.'
(*Makers in focus* discussion forum, 2004)

7.16.5 The least wanted types of investment were in

- professional development training (7%)
- living costs (7%)
- employing staff (5%)
- childcare costs (2%)

It is worth noting that professional development training was identified by the listed makers surveyed as one of the least wanted types of investment. It was perceived as one of the least useful ways to support makers' careers and as bringing least benefits.

Table 32
What type of investment would best support your practice?

Type of investment	*Number*	*Percentage*
Research/development in creative work	93	52%
Purchasing new equipment	80	45%
Research/development of your market opportunities	77	43%
Research/development of promotional materials	55	31%
Studio premises	49	27%
Purchasing raw materials	32	18%
Technical training	18	10%
Professional development training	13	7%
Living costs	13	7%
Employing staff	10	5%
Childcare costs	3	2%
	179	

7.17 Support towards further success and growth of practice

Above anything else, listed makers want support to develop opportunities to help the growth of their practices.

7.17.1 The support that respondents want towards further success and growth (Table 33) comprised

- the support to develop opportunities nationally (54%)
- the support to develop opportunities in the region (41%)
- the support to develop opportunities internationally (35%)

7.17.2 These findings confirm the original hypothesis informing the research: makers' own perceptions of their needs are that they relate to selling, exhibiting and widening their professional activities. Makers want support which puts them directly into new markets, and helps them to experience new activities and opportunities in order to bring them greater recognition by the arts and crafts world, and to support their earning a living.

7.17.3 The findings suggest that, if professional development training is to be perceived as useful and relevant by makers, a greater link must be made between the providers of professional development, the provision that they offer, and makers, their existing and potential markets, and the professional opportunities and activities of the applied arts and design 'worlds'. There appears, at present, to be a gap between available support to the maker for enhancing skills and knowledge, and the paucity of support on offer for accessing, developing and creating new markets and professional opportunities.

7.17.4 Respondents want providers to support them by developing new professional opportunities. Current professional development, on the whole, is perceived as failing to address this. 55% (Table 27) of respondents to *Makers in focus* were not accessing international market opportunities, and those that were doing so had a very limited involvement. Support for greater exploitation of international, national and regional markets is needed.

7.17.5 Similar findings concerning selling and public commissions were made by the *Making It in the 21st Century* survey:

'65% saw the importance of having a greater number of Crafts Council selling events.'
(McAuley and Fillis, 2004)

'84% agreed with the importance of selling and promoting British work and makers at an international level. Over 70% saw the importance of commissions for public buildings and sites.'
(McAuley and Fillis, 2004)

7.17.6 Support least wanted by *Makers in focus* respondents was

- technical skills training (8%)
- access to a mentor/mentee programme (6%)
- organised critical debate events (2%)

7.17.7 Table 33 illustrates that only 11 listed makers thought that mentoring schemes would be of value to furthering the success and growth of their practices. Further to tease out the meaning of this response, makers at the discussion forum were asked about their understanding of mentoring schemes. It emerged clearly that the group did not understand what such schemes involved. One maker asked:

'What is that? What does it mean?'

One comment was:

'A mentor would have to be successful to be in such a position to advise.'
(*Makers in focus* discussion forum 2004)

One maker felt that he had an insight into what was involved after a one-month artist's placement, and understood mentoring to be an exchange of expertise, skills and knowledge.

In contrast to the findings of the Crafts Council survey, Making It in the 21st Century, critical debate was not identified by Makers in focus participants as being of value.

7.17.8 Only three listed makers thought that critical debate would be of value to furthering the success and growth of their practices. This is in contrast to the findings of the *Making It in the 21st Century* survey, which found that critical debate was desired by makers:

'Yet at the same time there was a strong desire among makers to have a critical debate around craft.'
(McAuley and Fillis, 2004)

7.17.9 11% of respondents to *Makers in focus* were not interested in furthering the success and growth of their business or career. Surprisingly, these respondents were not from the group of makers that classified themselves as hobbyists. All of the hobbyists wanted to further the success and growth of their practices, but 7% of sole traders, 1% of partnerships and 2% of unsure (didn't know their legal status) declared that they did not want to further their career or business. This could suggest that these makers are already working to full capacity, unable to produce more work, and happy with their current turnover and level of profile.

Table 33
What support do you perceive to be helpful to furthering success and growth?

Type of support	*Number*	*Percentage*
Support to develop opportunities in the UK	96	54%
Support to develop opportunities in the region	73	41%
Support to develop opportunities internationally	62	35%
One to one support & advice	35	19%
Access to studio space	28	16%
IT training	28	16%
Organised networking events	21	12%
Short courses in business & professional skills	21	12%
Access to equipment	20	11%
I don't want to further my career/business	19	11%
Access to information	16	9%
Technical skills training	15	8%
Access to a mentor/mentee programme	11	6%
Organised critical debate events	3	2%
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7.18 What do respondents define as success?

Makers are primarily concerned with producing high quality work and, secondarily, with wanting to earn a living from their practices.

7.18.1 54% of makers identify self-assessment of quality as being the means by which they measure the success of their creative output (Table 34). 52% take into account their capacity to earn a living from it and 33% the recognition that they receive from the arts and crafts world and from other makers. 32% measure UK-wide sales. These results confirm that makers are committed to their practices and are primarily concerned with producing high quality work. At the same time, however, their interests lie in earning a living, gaining recognition and exhibiting work that they consider to be of high quality.

7.18.2 The least relevant measures of success are perceived to be

- representation by established West Midlands galleries
- selling regionally
- representation by international galleries
- recognition by national media

It is interesting that selling regionally is not rated more highly, particularly as 41% of respondents' main markets are regional. Nonetheless, makers seem to identify selling internationally and UK-wide as greater measures of success than selling in the region.

Table 34
How would you measure your success?

Measure of success	*Number*	*Percentage*
Personal judgement of quality of work	97	54%
Earning a living	94	52%
Recognition by other makers	60	33%
Recognition by arts/craft world	60	33%
Selling UK wide	58	32%
Representation by established national galleries	44	24%
Selling internationally	28	16%
Representation by established galleries in West Midlands	17	9%
Selling regionally	15	8%
Representation by international galleries	11	6%
Recognition by national media	10	5%
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