



Dr Nkumbu Mutambo (left) and Helen Simmons (right) join Deputy Head of Northumbria School of Design, Dr Rod Adams, for a Designamite podcast episode.

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Study will examine whether popular podcast can influence research culture

A podcast which shares regular insights into the trailblazing research and teaching at Northumbria University's School of Design is now the subject of a study aimed at uncovering the potential impact on research culture.

Led by Senior Research Assistants Helen Simmons and Dr Nkumbu Mutambo, the Designamite podcast was launched last summer as a way of helping to highlight the people and projects driving creativity and innovation across all

activities within [Northumbria School of Design](#).

Recorded in the podcasting booths available at Northumbria Students' Union and Squires Building on Newcastle City Campus, each episode features guests from a range of disciplines who are invited to discuss their areas of expertise, collaborations and upcoming events to showcase some of the exciting ways staff and students are helping to influence change for the better through their work.

Senior Research Assistants from Northumbria School of Design, Helen Simmons and Dr Nkumbu Mutambo.

Early episodes focused on the priorities of the [Creative Fuse](#) North East team, a partnership involving all five of the North East's universities and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), to support growth and innovation in the creative, cultural, IT and digital sectors in the region.

Since then Helen and Nkumbu have taken their roving mic to University events to record Designamite episodes, including the Design Council's [Design for Planet Festival](#), held in partnership with Northumbria in November last year.

"The audience is growing all the time and includes listeners from across the UK, Czech Republic, Germany, Spain, Peru, Brazil, Malaysia and Canada," said Helen. "There's a great community forming from our initial idea of starting Designamite as an alternative way of sharing information. We felt it was important to recognise all the ways research can be captured and shared. Designamite is one way to extend sharing in a less formal and more social space accessible to a much greater audience."

Now, thanks to some internal Knowledge Exchange and Research Impact Pump Priming funding awarded by the University, Designamite has become the focus of a six-month research study to investigate whether the podcast is benefitting the research environment within the School of Design.

"We feel that the podcast is something authentic which belongs to the School of Design community so we haven't curated it too much at all," explained Nkumbu. "We want to try and document how it has been used during this

time and find out whether colleagues feel it has had an impact on inspiring new ideas, raising awareness of each other's work and improving the collaborative research culture we already have.”

“It's definitely given me a renewed sense of community,” added Helen. “It's interesting because it's so accessible, we're finding more and more now that our guests are approaching us to be part of it. Hopefully this research will help us to expand the scope and sustainability of the podcast for the future.”

Both Helen and Nkumbu had limited knowledge of podcasting before Designamite was launched and admit that planning and producing each episode has been a learning curve for them. An accompanying Instagram account [@designamitenu](#) provides supporting visuals for each episode and as they develop their skills further, Helen and Nkumbu hope to be able to introduce video to the recording process to help bring each episode to life.

Dr Heather Robson, Head of Northumbria School of Design, said: “I firmly believe in the power of design to make positive and significant impact on the world; the work and research of colleagues that takes place in the School is inspirational. Through the Designamite series Helen and Nkumbo are capturing that and offering a meaningful insight and real sense of our community.”

You can tune in to Designamite on a range of podcasting platforms, including Spotify: <https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/designamitenu>

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