

Impact case study (REF3b)

<p>Institution: Queen Mary University of London (QMUL)</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: UoA 29: English Literature and Language</p>
<p>Title of case study: Dr Williams’s Centre for Dissenting Studies: research benefiting an independent library and its users</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) The Dr Williams’s Centre for Dissenting Studies, a collaboration between the Queen Mary English Department and Dr Williams’s Library, Gordon Square, London, has undertaken a long-term and ongoing programme of funded research projects, public engagement events, and publications in print and online. Dr Williams’s Library is a non-HEI (owned by Dr Williams’s Trust, Charity number 214926) dedicated to the preservation and study of collections related to the history of Protestant dissent. Prof Isabel Rivers (QMUL 2004-), and Dr David Wykes, Director of the Library, founded the Centre in 2004 because of their mutual interest in the field. The work of the Centre’s Queen Mary researchers, including publications hosted on the Centre’s website, has enhanced the public profile of the Library, improved its accessibility to the wider public, and transformed the public understanding of the history of Protestant dissent.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) The Dr Williams’s Centre for Dissenting Studies began in 2004 as a collaboration between Prof Isabel Rivers, and Dr David Wykes, Director of Dr Williams’s Library. The collaboration aimed to utilise the Library’s unique but then under-researched holdings of books and manuscripts to increase knowledge and understanding of the importance of puritanism and Protestant dissent in English society and literature. Protestant dissenters who would not conform to the Church of England were criminalized after the Restoration of Charles II; though the Act of Toleration of 1689 granted Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Quakers freedom to worship, they remained second-class citizens till the early nineteenth century, and developed their own parallel religious, intellectual, and literary traditions. Through a programme of research (including funded projects, conferences, studentships, and fellowships), a series of publications, both print and digital, and online databases, Queen Mary researchers at the Centre have since transformed public awareness of the culture of Protestant dissent.</p> <p>Initial publications by Rivers (2003) and Wykes (1996) had identified the importance of the history of the dissenting academies — educational institutions intended to provide Protestant students dissenting from the Church of England with a higher education similar to that at Oxford and Cambridge, from which they were largely excluded. The Leverhulme and AHRC funded <i>Dissenting Academies Project</i> led by Rivers is creating a comprehensive, archive-based history that has already increased, through its published online databases, scholarly understanding of the importance of the Protestant dissenting academies to higher education and intellectual life in Britain and overseas for a period of two hundred years.</p> <p>The research is based on manuscript and print sources, predominantly in Dr Williams’s Library, but also in a wide range of repositories, including Bristol Baptist College, Harris Manchester College, National Library of Wales, John Rylands Library, Manchester, and Castle Hill United Reformed Church, Northampton. The researchers have so far entered in a relational database c.230 academies, 700 tutors, 4,300 archival sources, and 10,000 students; 63 academy histories and 52 tutor biographies have been published, with many more being written and edited. It is now possible to make chronological, regional, and denominational (Congregational, Presbyterian, Baptist, or Methodist) or theological comparisons of academy size, subjects studied, kinds of student, entry requirements, qualifications of tutors, students’ subsequent careers, and student and academy funding.</p> <p>Online digital open-access publication has been key to the Centre’s research programme. By entering the material into databases, and establishing cross-cutting relations between the data, Rivers and the Centre’s team of post-doctoral researchers have developed a new history of dissenting education and culture. A relational database of <i>The Surman Index</i>, a card catalogue of c.32,000 Congregational ministers held at the Library, funded by a British Academy Small Grant to Wykes, was published by the Centre in 2009. This was later integrated into the Centre’s innovative large-scale resource, <i>Dissenting Academies Online</i> (2011), which publishes the records of</p>

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dissenting higher education, 1660-1860, in two linked databases: the *Database and Encyclopedia*, containing c.15,000 entries on students, tutors, archives, and academies, together with academy histories and tutor biographies; and the *Virtual Library System*, a unique union catalogue recording c.20,000 catalogue records of seven leading Baptist, Congregational, and Presbyterian academy libraries in England. With c.30,000 individual borrowings from some of these libraries included, the *Virtual Library System* illuminates the reading practices of students and tutors. The Centre's collaborative doctoral students have published online editions of manuscripts held by Dr Williams's and other libraries: sources for John Jennings's academy, letters of Joseph Priestley, and the archives of New College, Hackney.

In January 2013 Dr James Vigus succeeded Rivers as Co-Director of the Centre. Vigus's previous work (including 2010, 2013) on the very extensive collection of Henry Crabb Robinson's manuscripts held at the Library underpins a major new research project at the Centre. *The Crabb Robinson Project* was launched on 12 July 2013 through a workshop at the Library funded by a British Academy/Leverhulme Trust Small Grant (to Vigus). Under the general editorship of Prof Timothy Whelan (Senior Visiting Fellow) it will publish a multi-volume critical edition of Robinson's *Reminiscences and Diary* with OUP over the next 15 years.

Practice has been shared through the four AHRC collaborative doctoral projects Rivers has supervised with Wykes; Wykes has regularly contributed to the department's MA seminars, introducing students to the library's archives. The doctoral students have made research presentations to the Library Committee of Dr Williams's Trust.

The archival research and editorial work presented in the databases has been accompanied by a series of print publications on dissenting literary culture. Rivers (2009) established the parameters for the study of religious publishing in the eighteenth century. Whitehouse (2010) and Rivers (2010) applied these general principles to the edition of the New Testament by the tutor and hymn writer Philip Doddridge, which he designed for both a student and family audience, to show how dissenting academy scholarship was disseminated through astute publishing strategies. The Centre has published five edited collections arising from its conferences, two edited by Rivers and Wykes, including *Dissenting Praise* (2011).

Key researchers at submitting unit:

- (i) Isabel Rivers: Professor, QMUL 2004-, co-director of the Centre 2004-12
- (ii) James Vigus: Visiting Fellow (while Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich) 2009-12; Lecturer, QMUL 2012-; co-director of the Centre 2013-;
- (iii) Tessa Whitehouse: QMUL Collaborative Doctoral Award Student 2007-11, Lecturer QMUL 2012-
- (iv) Post-Doctoral Research Fellows: Simon Dixon (QMUL 2008-11); Rosemary Dixon (QMUL 2009-11); Kyle Roberts (QMUL 2009-11)
- (v) Collaborative Doctoral Award Students: Simon Mills (QMUL 2005-09); Stephen Burley (QMUL 2007-11); Mark Burden (QMUL 2007-11)
- (vi) Post-Doctoral Research Assistants: Benjamin Bankhurst (QMUL 2012-13); Rachel Eckersley (QMUL 2012-13)

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. Rivers, Isabel, 'Religious Publishing', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol. 5, 1695–1830, ed. Michael Suarez and Michael Turner (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 579-600. ISBN: 978-0521810173 – book chapter, can be supplied by the HEI on request; quality justification: positive peer reviews.
2. Rivers, Isabel, 'Philip Doddridge's New Testament: *The Family Expositor* (1739-56)', in *The King James Bible after 400 Years: Literary, Linguistic and Cultural Influences*, ed. Hannibal Hamlin and Norman Jones (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 124-45. ISBN: 978-1107654136 – book chapter, can be supplied by the HEI on request; quality justification: positive peer reviews: for example Diarmaid MacCulloch, *LRB* 33:3 (3 February 2011). Submitted REF2014.
3. Rivers, Isabel, and David L. Wykes (ed.), *Dissenting Praise: Religious Dissent and the Hymn in England and Wales* (Oxford University Press, 2011). 299pp. ISBN 978-0199545247 – edited

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collection, can be supplied by the HEI on request; quality justification: peer-reviewed publication. Introduction demonstrates the collaboration directly. Positively reviewed on publication: 'The importance of the hymn may have dwindled in popular culture, but it is still crucial in understanding cultural development and religious identity of the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. This is an ideal guide, and invaluable resource, for such scholarship.' Felicity James, *The Review of English Studies* 63:261 (2012).

4. Vigus, James, "All are but parts of one stupendous whole"? Henry Crabb Robinson's Dilemma', in *Symbol and Intuition: Comparative Studies in Kantian and Romantic-Period Aesthetics*, ed. Helmut Hühn and James Vigus (Legenda, 2013), 123-38. ISBN: 978-1907625046 – book chapter, can be supplied by the HEI on request; quality justification: this chapter builds on Vigus's edition *Henry Crabb Robinson: Essays on Kant, Schelling, and German Aesthetics* (MHRA, 2010): positively reviewed on publication: 'an essential text for anyone interested in late Enlightenment and early Romantic thought in Germany and in what Robinson did to disseminate that thought beyond the borders of the German-speaking world.' Eugene Stelzig, *New Books On Literature* 19, (28 June 2011). Both items submitted REF 2014.
5. Whitehouse, Tessa, 'The Family Expositor, the Doddridge Circle and the Booksellers', *The Library*, 7th ser., 11:3 (2010), 321-44 – Journal article, can be supplied by the HEI on request; quality justification: peer reviewed journal.
6. *Dissenting Academies Online* (2011, ongoing): *Database and Encyclopedia, Virtual Library System* <<http://www.english.qmul.ac.uk/drwilliams/portal.html>>. The articles contain c.230,000 words – quality justification:
Funded by: Leverhulme Trust (Research Project Grant, ref. F/07 476/AG) £247,173; AHRC Religion and Society Programme (Large Grant, ref. AH/G014019/1) £366,269; AHRC Follow-On Fund (ref. AH/J008656/1) £95,821.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The Centre's research, events, and publications can be shown to have had an impact on the work of Dr Williams's Library and those who use its collections, on the varied audiences for the Centre's events, on Bristol Baptist College (a non HEI), and on a much wider global audience who use the databases. The Centre's research and publications have also transformed public and academic understanding of the field of Protestant dissent, contributing to the re-evaluation of its cultural legacy.

Enhancing access to Library resources

The Centre's research projects have brought a new and very demanding readership to the Library, which has made it a stimulating place to work. The Queen Mary researchers' need to consult manuscripts regularly has meant that the Library has focused on preparation of these for reading and has implemented conservation plans. The digitization projects have made previously unknown material accessible; transcription and summaries have made information much easier to interpret; the relational databases have created new open-access knowledge. The online articles written by Rivers, Wykes and their team for the *Database and Encyclopedia* have provided an entirely new history of dissenting higher education for both academic and general readers. *The Surman Index Online* allowed the typed card catalogue, hitherto usable in the Library alone, to be consulted all over the world. The editorial projects, especially *The Crabb Robinson Project*, for which Vigus is Assistant Editor, benefit the Library by saving fragile manuscripts from wear through use. *The Dissenting Academies Project* has also had an impact on another non-HEI, Bristol Baptist College, where much of its archive was uncatalogued. In 2009-10 the Centre's Post-Doctoral Research Fellows entered its manuscript catalogues into the Centre's *Virtual Library System* where the records are fully searchable by the public.

Transforming public understanding of Protestant dissent

Queen Mary researchers in the Centre have raised the Library's public profile through a strategic programme of public engagement. The digital databases are free and open-access, and have been used extensively by non-academic audiences around the world, especially those interested in family history, genealogy, and church history. Most of the Centre's events are open to the public, the seminars are free, and are regularly attended by non-academics (33 seminars in the REF period). The public events (the seminar series and annual conferences) have brought in a wide

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range of attendees, some of whom then become library users. Thus for the Dissenting Hymn conference, a large number of members of the Hymn Society attended; for the Nonconformist Architecture conference, arranged with the Chapels Society, many members of that society attended. On average the attendance at seminars is 15-20 and at conferences 50 to 70. Public engagement road-shows, organised by the Centre, demonstrated the new digital resources to audiences at Harris Manchester College, Oxford, John Rylands Library, Manchester, and the Leeds Library. The online resources have generated high numbers of unique users in 2012 (the first complete year): Database and Encyclopedia: 6419; Surman: 9326; Virtual Library System: 9302. In the period June 2011 to July 2013 inclusive, the databases received 780,357 page views, demonstrating that users engage with the resources in a deep manner.

Enhancing the Library

Queen Mary's support for the Centre has been highly beneficial for the Library. Queen Mary, through the Faculty and the Department, has supported the Centre with resources and staff time to sustain the collaboration with the Library; hosted the research fellows, research assistants, technical assistant, and doctoral students; provided funding (£18,000 2004-07, £15,930 2008-2013) to support the Centre's events at the Library; and provided the Centre with web and publication design services and computing resources for the development, mounting and maintenance of the databases. Collaboration with the Centre's researchers has played an important part in the Library's recent and ongoing programme of enhancements. For instance, the Centre has provided the Library with a specialist camera and tripod for making high-resolution images of print and manuscript, purchased using AHRC funding for one of the Centre's projects. Rivers and Vigus served on a Working Group of the Friends of Dr Williams's Library that has submitted a detailed report containing recommendations for the further development of the Library's reader services and its research profile in the longer term. In the wake of the QMUL large grants from the Leverhulme Trust and the AHRC, the Library has obtained small grants from a number of different bodies: Manchester Academy Trust, Manchester Memorial Hall Trust, Congregational Memorial Hall Trust, and Pilgrim Trust. Through the work of the Centre's Queen Mary researchers, and their publications and databases, Dr Williams's Library, a charitable institution dedicated to the preservation and study of Protestant dissent, has wider reach and significance, and its resources can increasingly be consulted globally. In his letter corroborating this impact statement, Wykes has commented: 'The collaboration has been an outstanding success; it has achieved everything and more that the Trustees had hoped when the Centre was established in 2004. It has not only enhanced the work and reputation of the Library, it has been of direct benefit to its staff, members, and the wider dissenting community.'

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)**Individual**

1. Director, Dr Williams's Library; for increased use of DWL's collections; preparation and conservation of collections for users; attendance at Centre events; collaboration in teaching.
2. Editor of the scholarly blog Dissenting Experience; for broad impact of the open-access publications.
3. Director of the AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society Programme; for impact of the large grant funded by the Programme, 'Dissenting Academy Libraries and their Readers, 1720-1860', and the research of the CDA holder also funded by the programme.
4. The Librarian, Bristol Baptist College; for impact on the College Library of the work of the postdoctoral research fellows and of *Dissenting Academies Online: Virtual Library System*.
5. President of the United Reformed Church History Society, and former Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church; for use of *Surman Index Online* and *Dissenting Academies Online: Database and Encyclopedia* by URC.

Other sources

6. Statistics are collected for the three Centre databases *Surman Index Online*, *Dissenting Academies Online: Database and Encyclopedia* and *Dissenting Academies Online: Virtual Library System* using AWStats.