

Institution: University of Sussex

Unit of Assessment: UoA 30 History

1. Context

History at Sussex has pursued an impact agenda focused on enhancing cultural life, education and public discourse. The Department has developed its impact strategy through significant partnerships with five principal non-academic users: broadcasters, government offices, schools, museums, and libraries. These collaborations facilitate communication between Departmental researchers and both the broader public and policy-makers. While impact is integral to the research conducted by all historians at Sussex, our strategy has been shaped by colleagues whose scholarship has particular potential to engage audiences outside of academia. These historians represent four key areas of research interest and activity:

- Modern British History
- Middle Eastern and Asian History
- Intellectual History and the History of Science
- American History.

2. Approach to impact

Our approach to impact has focused on collaboration with a variety of non-academic partners. Some faculty interactions with beneficiaries and audiences have been deliberately planned while others have developed serendipitously. What is important is that the Department has drawn on the experiences of these collaborations, both planned and unplanned, to build a more systematic and longer-term impact strategy through sustained partnerships with non-academic user-groups.

One of the most important means by which the Department promotes public engagement with historical research is through our partnerships with the media. While numerous members of the Department have made broadcasting appearances, Robinson has cultivated some of the more significant partnerships. Her research related to the Mass Observation Archive and *Observing the '80s* project (an open-access digital archive that includes material from the British Library, the Mass Observation Project and Special Collections at Sussex under a Creative Commons Licence) has featured in numerous media outlets. This includes *BBC News* (12 January 2012), *BBC South Today* (13 February 2012) and *BBC South East* (25 February 2013). These have contributed to cultural life by helping to historicise the recent past for public audiences. Robinson has, through her involvement with these programmes, developed a working relationship with BBC executive producer Mark Cooper, with the aim to develop further productions. Her co-organisation of the MusicDoc Festival in Brighton during July 2011, an interdisciplinary event on the history of music documentary, has similarly led to her being invited to serve as academic consultant on filmmaker Jeannie Finlay's production *Orion*.

The impact of Departmental research has been further facilitated through partnership with government offices. Evans has provided an important historical perspective on contemporary security issues in North Africa to numerous government departments. In June 2008, he delivered a presentation at the Royal United Services Institute on the threat posed by Al-Qaida in North Africa, to an audience that included MPs, civil servants and the head of MI5. In December 2012, Evans also delivered the paper 'Stopping the cycle of violence in contemporary Algeria' at the Tactical Transition Workshop in Oxford, an event attended by representatives from the Armed Forces, Department for International Development, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Ministry of Defence. Evans has also collaborated with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as part of an initiative by William Hague promoting the use of history to inform contemporary policy. In December 2012, Evans addressed the British Ambassador and diplomatic staff in Algeria on the relevance of historical perspectives. He gave a second presentation, via satellite to the deputy ambassador in Algiers and

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civil servants in Tunis, in July 2013. The significance of Evans' historical research to framing understanding of present-day Algeria is underlined by the assignment of his monographs *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed* and *Algeria: France's Undeclared War* as required reading for diplomatic staff serving in Algeria. The Algerian British Business Council also recommends the former of these monographs to its members as an essential text.

A further form of impact is partnership with secondary schools to facilitate the classroom use of education materials arising from Departmental research. Gazeley's British Living Standards project included a teacher-scholar scheme run in collaboration with the National Archives during Autumn 2012. The scheme provided secondary-school teachers with the opportunity to develop an expertise in the use of the project's datasets, which can then be used to devise lessons and resources for use in the classroom.

In addition, Departmental research has created and interpreted cultural capital through its use in the curating of exhibitions by museums. Through these collaborations, our research has enriched public understanding of a range of topics and helped to present cultural heritage. Between October 2012 and March 2013, the State Museum of Upper Austria in Linz ran an exhibition based on Endersby's *A Guinea Pig's History of Biology*. One measure of the exhibition's impact is that it led to the publication of a German translation of the book. Endersby is using the experience of working with the State Museum to cultivate further partnerships with curators, including potential collaboration with the Herstmonceaux Observatory Museum, the Engineerium in Hove and the Booth Natural History Museum in Brighton.

Individual collaborations with museums and libraries have developed into sustained working relationships. In 2009, the Natural History Museum invited Damodaran to contribute to its Endangered Archives Programme. The museum supported her proposal to invest resources in preserving the plant drawings, specimens and correspondence of botanist Nathaniel Wallach. This, in turn, led to Damodaran being asked to serve as academic consultant for an international conference on South Asian natural history collections organised by the museum in December 2011. On the basis of this and of her British Academy-funded project *The East India Company and the Natural World*, the museum also hired her as an academic expert for its promotional video accompanying the exhibition *Images of Nature: The Art of India*, which opened in February 2013. Damodaran provided historical context that enhanced audience understanding of the exhibition artefacts. Damodaran and Endersby have together cultivated a strong working relationship with Kew Royal Botanical Gardens. The Joseph Hooker Project facilitates public understanding of this pioneering botanist through the online transcription of his correspondence with Indian naturalists and the creation of a display relating to his work that featured in the Inspiring Kew exhibition at the Shirley Sherwood Gallery of Botanical Art.

In the REF period, the Department has provided numerous forms of support to help colleagues to achieve impact. Our Research Committee assisted colleagues in refining the impact strategies that are a core element of research-grant applications. The committee liaised with the School Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange, who assesses the impact potential of applications as a condition of authorising their submission to RCUK. The Department also worked with the university's Press and Communications Office to publicise innovative research and to promote faculty expertise to potential beneficiaries.

3. Strategy and plans

Moving forward, the Departmental strategy for maximising impact is to strengthen existing collaborations and cultivate new connections with non-academic stakeholders. Implementation of this strategy will be achieved through the following initiatives.

- The Department has established an annual impact-agenda workshop to promote the dissemination of good practice by providing critical reflection on the experience of collaborating with non-academic partners. The Research Associates involved in the projects funded by the AHRC Cultural Engagement Fund led on the first of these workshops in June 2013.

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Representatives from museums, schools and publishing will attend future workshops with the aim of fostering further partnership outside of academe. Longer-term strategy will also be facilitated by working closely with the University's new Research Impact Officer to maximise the impact potential of future research projects.

- The Department will further promote the impact component of current and future research projects through the construction of a database – accessible to faculty and research students – that includes contact details of its non-academic partners. *Ad hoc* arrangements for faculty visits to local schools and museums have been replaced by a more centralised scheme.
- The Department's Research Committee will assist faculty with the impact component of grant applications. Our Research Committee includes experienced scholars with established records in securing grants from RCUK who will provide colleagues preparing applications with advice on cultivating partnerships outside of academe and on the impact requirements of project proposals. Impact is also integral to the growth strategy of the Department – the knowledge exchange potential of research is an essential criteria for new faculty appointments.

Departmental plans to support impact from research focus on several key projects.

- Damodaran and Endersby are engaged in a project on colonial botanical gardens that builds on established collaborations with the British Library and the Kew Royal Botanic Gardens. The ambitious impact agenda for this project includes a proposed exhibition at Kew's Museum No.1. Endersby, who formerly served as a consultant to the BBC television series *Power, Proof and Passion*, is also in discussion with producers about a programme based on the project.
- Gazeley has secured a £1.25 million grant from the ESRC for the project *Global Income Equality*, which builds upon *Living Standards of British Households*. It will use household expenditure surveys from around the world to measure world inequality from the late-nineteenth century to the 1960s. Potential stakeholders in the research include policy-makers, the media and schools. Gazeley will, for instance, renew his collaboration with the National Archives Education Department to inform secondary-school teachers about the classroom application of its datasets.
- Robinson will broaden the beneficiaries of *Observing the '80s* to include schools, colleges and universities that will incorporate the material into their teaching curricula, and broadcasters whose use of the project informs programme content.

4. Relationship to case studies

Our case studies demonstrate the importance of the Department's partnerships with non-academic stakeholders to maximise research impact. Langhamer has cultivated strong working relationships with numerous broadcasters through the Mass Observation Project that creatively influences programming and facilitates public engagement with the everyday experience of the British people in the twentieth century. The commissioning of programmes such as BBC Radio 4's special edition on Mass Observation has, in turn, generated further creative collaboration with Langhamer, whose research informs ideas for broadcasting such as the proposed series about the history of love by production company ReelJems. Audience figures and feedback provide measures of the impact of Mass Observations on public discourse. Iliffe's Newton Project further illustrates how Departmental research informs creative practices by broadcasters and the Arts that contribute to broader cultural life. This includes numerous broadcasters' use of the project to inform the intellectual content of programming. The project further shows the significance of collaboration with educational partners, including the British Society for the History of Mathematics, to inform the cross-disciplinary teaching in schools. Similarly, collaboration between Follett and the education website Teachinghistory.org has led to the application of *Sugar, Slavery and Society* to the curricula of US high schools and universities. With impact now integral to academic research, Sussex aims to be at the forefront of knowledge transfer through infrastructural investment and by nurturing current and cultivating new creative partnerships locally, nationally and internationally.